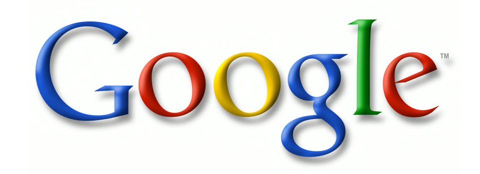
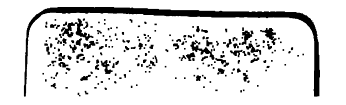








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Mirabeau.

Published by Smith, Elder & Co London



MIRABEAU:

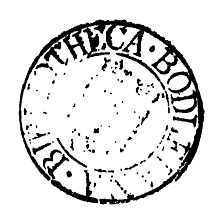
A Life-History.

IN FOUR BOOKS.

"Strange lot! Forty years of that smouldering with foul fire-damp and vapour enough; then victory over that;—and, like a burning mountain, he blazes heaven high; and for twenty-three resplendent months pours out, in flame and molten fire-torrents, all that is in him, the Pharos and Wonder-sign of an amazed Europe;—and then lies hollow, cold, for ever!"

CARLYLE'S *French Revolution*.

VOL. I.—TRIAL!



LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1848.

London:
Printed by STEWART and MURRAY,
Old Bailey.

I DEDICATE

These Volumes

TO ONE WHO, BEYOND ALL OTHERS,

WILL REJOICE AT THEIR APPEARANCE,

AND WHO, KIND CRITIC AS SHE IS,

WILL SEE FEW FAULTS THEREIN—

TO

MY MOTHER.

PREFACE.

In these times, when the whole continent of Europe is more or less distracted, and when France is stultifying herself in her third revolution, and only our own country stands firmly dignified, any work treating of the former great revolution must call for some prefatorial remarks.

When the present pitiable mais-planting farce was far hidden in the womb of Time, the materials for this work were being laboriously collected; and, before the memorable 23rd of February, a considerable portion was ready for the press. It was not, therefore, suggested by this new eruption. I am, however, free to confess, that my selections from Mirabeau's productions, in the second volume, have been greatly influenced thereby. I have endeavoured to choose such passages as were still sound practicable advice to Frenchmen, and, in fact, to every lover of order and of peace.

I was induced to attempt this biography by many reasons. 1st, We have no life whatever of Mirabeau. 2nd, The French have no readable memoirs of him. 3rd, In all our sketches, &c. of him (and they are as numerous as lives are scarce) not only are very many malignant and scandalous false statements fastened upon him, but the actual actions of his life are misstated, misdated, or omitted. Lastly, I considered him as an ill-used and misjudged man: taking, amid the wrath of parties, the wise, moderate course which lay between them; hating mob-rule and anarchy as fervently as despotism and absolute monarchical rule, he has fallen in for the plentiful abuse of both parties: which I deemed it quite time —the secret of correct judgment not lying in extremes and excesses—to endeavour to wipe away.

But beyond these, there was another and a higher one. I believed that the moral, deducible from a veracious consideration of Mirabeau's life and actions, would be advantageous to all earnest men, whether politicians or not. To the non-politician, this moral —That a man without steady principles, a sincere devotion to the mysterious spirit-laws each man more or less feels within him, and which we name Conscience and Religion, is a dangerous man; for, though his bad actions may not result from corruption of heart, there must ever be a looseness, a vagueness of principle about him, ruinous to him-

self, and hostile to the very fundamentals of social virtue.

To the politician, this moral—That in no case, however scrupulously correct be the ulterior object, is it other than culpable and rash to sweep away good and evil promiscuously. The parable teaches, that to let the wheat and tares *grow* together, and root out the tares in the harvest, is wisdom; to pull up the young shoots, throw away the tares, and then attempt replanting the wheat, is not wisdom: is folly; and, it may be, crime. The great Mirabeau lamenting, at the close of his life, his youthful violences; and expiating his political rashness by undertaking and perishing under the salvation of the monarchy—dying with the hell-riot, he unintentionally had aroused, ringing in his ear—conveys a moral to be recommended to all politicians: to be recommended, above all, to his own countrymen at the present time; whom, judging dispassionately, one would hardly censure for being *too* moderate, *too* temperate, in their most organic reforms.

Though no panegyrist, I am nevertheless an ardent admirer of Mirabeau; considering him a man not hateable: a man, in fact, who demands sympathy and pity; his faults being the result of an improperly-trained, a scandalously-neglected childhood. His errors were but half his; his brilliances, his goodnesses, were his own, entirely and alone. If, how-

ever, to any it should appear that in some instances my sympathy has been too strong, I would beseech such to reflect how far their scruples are conventional; how far vitally Christian: I would remind them that the clinging to the hollow outside when the inner life-principle has long been extracted, is the source of all insincerity, rottenness, and sin.

That, at the commencement of a new National Assembly in France, when the Utopian era of universal brotherhood is once again endeavouring to be established, and the Marseillaise era of universal silliness, fanfaronade, fête-holding, &c. is already established; that what the greatest of all Frenchmen thought, said, and acted amid such scenes, will be interesting to the reading and reflecting world, I cannot but think.

The labour of amassing an accurate account thereof has been protracted and wearying; but if, thereby, a sound conclusion on French politics is facilitated; and if, beyond that, any fellow-creature is led to regard this illustrious Mirabeau less as a monster and more as a man, and, instead of hating him with an indignant hate, to love him with an admiring and a tearful love, my purpose is indeed answered, and my labour amply rewarded.

Manchester, May, 1848.

The following is a list of the principal works from which the historical portion of this work, after careful comparison, has been compiled:—

Adolphus's History of France.
Alison's History of Europe.
Bailli's Memoirs.
Bertrand de Moleville's History of France.
Bouillé's Memoirs.
Campan's Marie Antoinette.
Carlyle's French Revolution.
Droz's History of the Reign of Louis XVI.
Ferrières' Memoirs.
Grönvelt's Letters.
Histoire Parliamentaire.
Impartial History of the French Revolution.
Lafayette's Memoirs (by his Family).
Lamartine's Girondists.
Mignet's History.
Michelet's History.
Pictorial History of England.
Prudhomme's Crimes of the Revolution.
St. Etienne's (Rabout) History of the Revolution.
Secret History of the Revolution.
Smyth's Lectures.
Staël (Madame de) on the French Revolution.
Thiers's History.
Toulongeon's History.
Williams' (H. M.) Letters from France.
Weber's Life of Marie Antoinette.

&c. &c. &c.

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BOOK I.

THE EDUCATION BY LETTRE DE CACHET.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

SOLOMON.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

In looking forth upon the broad and murky aspect of the French revolution, one individual above all others pre-eminently great, strikes the eye, and arrests the admiring attention of the hero-worshipper—and that one is, Gabriel Honoré de Riquetti, Count of Mirabeau. In the dreary annals of that arid eighteenth century, he appears as a bright oasis upon some wide Sahara-desert; as a glorious Geyser-fountain, bubbling from the lone Icelandic soil; or, as a resplendent scintillation gleaming from the black immensities of night!

To the memory of this man, as yet, no adequate biographical monument has been raised; let us therefore be pardoned, if, in the absence of a mighty statue, we endeavour to raise some smaller bust—humble, but we hope a faithful representation of the man. Previous, however, to doing

which, it may not be unadvisable to say a few words on our predecessors in the same path.

In England, we have no life of this man at all, either translated or otherwise; which, considering the voluminous lives of Napoleon, by Scott, by Hazlitt, and a crowd of *literati*, reflects small honour upon the discerning faculty of our nation. We have a translation of Dumont's *Souvenirs*, and of half the *Fils Adoptif;* beyond that, not a line, that the present writer, after searching every accessible catalogue, can discover. Nor, in fact, are the French nation very much better: the number of lives they possess is, we believe, none; the number of *attempts*, about seven.

Of the lives by Chaussard and others, it is sufficient to say that they had no resemblance to Mirabeau's real life, beyond the wide facts, that he was born, that he spoke well in the Assembly, and that he died; and also, that they have long since been consigned to that oblivion which all such entirely false books justly merit.

The biographies of Peuchet and Vitry, however, claim more attention; inasmuch as they are true, and that till of late years they were the standard lives of Mirabeau. But, if we except the aforenamed attempts, falser and duller works never issued from the press of any nation. Both were entirely ignorant of his private life, and not very

conversant with his true public career: the one, Peuchet, is an avowed and implacable enemy of Mirabeau, whose book is comprised of an untrue and purely fictitious narrative of his personal adventures, in which every scandalous anecdote floating in France has found ready insertion; the other, Vitry, is the undisguised panegyrist of his friend, and would perhaps have written a correcter life, had he possessed any other material than his own imagination. To sum up all, both these lives are execrable: we have no biography in the English language so utterly and unblushingly false, and at the same time so thoroughly tedious, as these seven volumes. They have ceased to be read, or perhaps even remembered, in France, save by life-writers and historians, and no edition of either has appeared for many years.

The French nation were well aware of this glaring deficiency in their biographical literature, and not a few authors were willing to commence so honourable a task; but then it was not apparent where truer materials than those of Peuchet and Co. were to be obtained; for the forty years of Mirabeau's private career were only known by the family papers—these lay in the hands of his adopted son, who, it was currently reported, was engaged in compiling a life therefrom. This was quite enough to deter any man, however self-

sufficient, from attempting one, and it is therefore no discredit to the French that none were written till that of the adopted son's appeared in 1834; the only wonder is, that since then no clear and vigorous condensation thereof has been given to the world. In 1832, however, great expectations were excited throughout the reading world, by the announcement of some "Recollections of Mirabeau," by his friend and *collaborateur*, Etienne Dumont of Geneva. These were doomed to undergo fearful disappointments; for, except three or four piquant anecdotes, there is hardly an interesting or veracious fact in the three hundred pages comprised under the head of *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau*. Not that we would insinuate that Dumont knowingly and wilfully lied in these Recollections; he was doubtless upright in his intent, but it must be borne in mind that they were first penned, from memory alone, at least thirty years after the actual occurrence, and by a man who informs us several times that he always had a radically defective memory. Nevertheless, as several historians have seen fit to believe and give currency to all such details as are depreciatory to Mirabeau, it may be as well to make a remark or two on the claims Dumont prefers, as to the authorship of several orations of his friend. It is impossible to prove that he is wrong, but there is strong presumptive evidence to show

that he is so: for instance, in cases where names, events, and personages are mentioned, the correctness whereof can be indubitably ascertained from veritable sources, in nine cases out of ten Dumont's memory has been treacherous, and they are erroneous in his book; if, therefore, these, which *can* be proved, are so equivocal, is it not probable that the other unproveable ones are of a like apocryphal nature? Then, again, if Dumont could compose, as he says he did, the brilliant and world-famous orations laid claim to by him, how is it that he could not continue to infuse such genius into the numerous works appearing under his name; and which are all flat, stale, and leaden productions, unillumined by the faintest glimmering of genius of the most meagre kind? The case is this: several orations lie before the world, claimed alike by Mirabeau and by Dumont: the latter, in all his other works, evinces no such power of writing; the former, in all his works, manifests more or less of the same brilliance; and on one or two occasions (as when De Brezé entered with a repetition of the king's commands to separate), when it was altogether impossible that the words uttered could be anything else than extemporaneous, he rises into a strain of sublimity far superior to the contested orations. Let, however, the respectable M. Dumont's question-

able little book pass: if all come to all, Mirabeau can resign these same speeches, and his fame be none the less brilliant for their sacrifice. But when, in 1836, the work of the adopted son (by name Lucas Montigny) issued complete into the world, in eight large octavo volumes, bearing the title of *Mémoires Biographiques, Litteraires et Politiques, de Mirabeau; écrits par Lui-même, par son Père, son Oncle, et son Fils Adoptif*, the world imagined that the true work had at length arrived, and that, as regarded the grand Riquetti, its biography would be now complete. One can easily imagine with what eagerness the noblest and most original writer of this century received those volumes: how he was disappointed in the same, let his own magnificent review thereof testify. We cannot better describe M. Montigny's work than in the words of that review, which runs thus:—

"This biographical work is a monstrous quarry or mound of shot-rubbish, in eight strata, hiding valuable matter, which he that seeks will find. Valuable, we say; for the adopted son having access, nay, welcome and friendly entreaty, to family papers, to all manner of archives, secret records, and working therein long years with a filial unweariedness, has made himself piously at home in all corners of the matter. He might with the

same spirit (as we always upbraidingly think) so easily have made us at home too! But, no; he brings to light things new and old; now precious illustrative private documents, now the poorest public heaps of mere pamphleteer and parliamentary matter, so attainable elsewhere, often so omissible were it not to be obtained; and jumbles and tumbles the whole together with such reckless clumsiness, with such endless copiousness (having waggon-loads enough), as gives the reader many a pang. . . . Call it a mine,—artificial, natural silver mine. Threads of beautiful silver lie scattered, which you must dig for, and sift; and suddenly, when your thread or vein is at the richest, it vanishes (as is the way with mines) in thick masses of agglomerate and puddingstone, and no man can guess whither. . . . Undoubtedly, the adopted son's will was good. Ought we not to rejoice greatly in the possession of these same silver mines; and take them in the buried mineral state, or in any state, too thankful to have them, now indestructible, now that they are printed? Let the world, we say, be thankful to M. Montigny, and yet know what they are thanking him for. No *life of Mirabeau* is to be found in these volumes, but the amplest materials for writing a *life*."*

* Carlyle's Miscellanies, iv. 14.

With this judgment, having, to the sore trial of our patience, waded carefully through the "eight strata," we must cordially agree; for the book is, indeed, a dust-heap containing diamonds. We have pages and pages of familiar prattle between persons whom nobody cares about, on topics which nobody cares about; and we have lines upon subjects of world-interest: nevertheless, one thing may be said, *which cannot be said of any other account of Mirabeau whatsoever*, that in these eight volumes no lie is to be found: no statement is hazarded, that cannot be proved beyond all controversy.

Feeling a deep interest in this Mirabeau, and seeing that in biographical dictionaries, and histories of Europe, and such like, nothing but the grossest falsehoods have hitherto been propagated; and believing, moreover, that, as it is the vilest sin to traduce or disbelieve a hero, so is it the noblest purpose pen can be applied to, to untraduce and make clean that hero, and to cleanse his effigy from the filth which ignorance or malevolence have flung upon it; we have endeavoured, with much expense and more labour, to concentrate from this *fils adoptif*, and other accredited sources, a concise and veracious life-history of Mirabeau.

The whole of the private history has been taken from the invaluable family papers printed by M. Montigny, but not without comparison with other

accounts; the public portion has been compiled from the papers of the times, and the endless shoals of histories of the eventful period wherein Mirabeau flourished. The margins, therefore, have not been burdened by innumerable references, since the former portion has been collated from M. Montigny's productions, and the latter is generally known, and little differing from ordinary historic narrative, save in its exclusiveness to what relates to Mirabeau. On the word of a true man, we can state, that in these pages there is no single fact promulgated, the truth whereof we have not taken every pains to discover; the truth whereof we ourselves do not implicitly believe.

Come, then, therefore, O thou reader, who—in these times of artificiality and money-worship, when dancing harlots drive Heaven's own inspiration to the shades, and the senseless, the sensual, and the frivolous are worshipped as more noble than the high, the pure, and the celestial—still hast an eye for truth, and reverencest God and the godlike in man;—come, and we will trace together the life-struggle of this giant-man—mark how he lived, fought, conquered, and finally went to his rest elsewhere. And when, at the conclusion of our travelling, we have gained the mountain-top, and look down upon the prospect

of a life outstretched beneath us, believe me, we shall find it as a beautiful Chamouni-valley, with azure skies, sunbeams, starlight, dew-tears, sweet bird-melodies, and at times with loud-roaring avalanche-thunders!

CHAPTER II.

GENEALOGIC.

1267—1749.

It is among the numberless characteristics of great men, that, by their own original lustre, they bring into notice, and throw some interest around, many other individuals; who, had it not been for them, might have remained in undisturbed oblivion: they are like midnight lightning, which not only manifests its own radiance, but flings a glow upon the lengthened landscape far as the eye can follow it. We may safely say that, had it not been for the subject of this biography, the long and illustrious line of the Riquettis, individually and collectively, would never have attracted attention at the present day. Not even the brave Jean-Antoine, nor the Friend of Man, would have been known: save, perhaps, in some very minute encyclopædia. For the most part it is popular curiosity

which thus prompts the life-writer, ere introducing his hero, to make the public acquainted with his ancestors—rejoicing unboundedly if they but chance to be of gentle blood. But it is a higher and a deeper reason which urges us to speak of Mirabeau's predecessors. It is because a sketch of them will manifest a fact, on which, in judging Mirabeau, we must lay much stress—that all his errors were not the result of his own vicious propensity, but simply of a constitutional fire-bloodedness and headlong stormfulness, traceable in all his ancestors, and evidently concentrating itself, and becoming more flameful, in his more immediate progenitors.

The feud between the mighty parties of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, divided in endless vicissitude the city of Florence: the Guelphs banishing the Ghibellines to-day, and to-morrow the Ghibellines returning in force and banishing the Guelphs, and so on. The first notice we get of the existence of the Riquetti or Arrighetti family, is in the year 1267, when Azzucius, or Azzo Riquetti, and all his connections and relatives, were, with many other Ghibellines, banished from Florence, by the then dominant faction. Azzo, thinking it better to establish his family permanently in a less distracted country, did not lie in the neighbourhood waiting feverishly for a re-action, but with the de-

cision of a brave man, took ship and landed with his son on the coast of Provence, and proceeded at once to establish himself at Seyne, an Alpine town of some importance. That the name was far-famed and noble in those days is indubitable, since the banished Azzo was ranked on the spot with the nobility around, and his son Peter married the beautiful heiress of the Count of Provence, Sybil de Fos, the Troubadour's heroine. "*Juvat Pietas*" was the family's motto; in keeping with which, and no doubt with the more tangible purpose of establishing a good name, Azzo founded an hospital at Seyne. His descendants, at different periods, erected Jesuits', Chartreux, and Récolet's convents at Marseilles; but did not show any devotion to the church by entering into its priesthood, as was the fashion with younger sons: they were of a wilder and fiercer nature. Anthony I., his son, rose to the highest honours, being elected chief judge of the province—an officer who must be of the purest nobility, and from whose judgment there was no appeal. This man it was, says tradition, who, in fulfilment of a vow at sea, chained two mountains at Moustier together, by a large iron chain, with an immense five-pointed star in the centre: whether this remains yet we cannot say, but it was in existence in 1770. Anthony died in 1412, and was succeeded by his

son Jacques, who purchased the co-lordship of the town of Riez, and whose grandson Honoré I. transplanted the family to Marseilles, where it soon rose to great splendour. Marseilles was at that time a second Venice—a proud, imperious, mercantile city, making terms with kings, and having its own independent government, with a first consul chosen from a noble and military family solely. Jean, the son of Honoré, seems to be the first clearly distinguishable great man of the Riquettis. In 1562 he was chosen first consul of the city. The protestant religion first appearing in plots and conspiracies in Marseilles in his day; this Jean, being a chivalrous catholic, scattered them like smouldering ashes, and trod them under foot: not without danger from friends and enemies. The populace, his friends, tore in pieces the deputy of the protestants, and Jean was wounded in endeavouring to save him. However, he succeeded in driving the innovators from the town, sent from his own private resources three hundred men to the catholic army, and, from the same source also, provisioned the garrison with necessary food. Despite these extensive outlays, Jean amassed a gigantic fortune by bold and successful speculation; he purchased the estate of Mirabeau, near Marseilles, whence his descendants took their title, as well as several others, and established a large

country house, with immense pleasure-gardens in the town itself. But though a zealous catholic, he was not a bigoted one, as his reply to the Bishop of Digne testifies. Charles IX. granted to Jean de Riquetti some feudal rents which he had previously granted to the bishop. A dispute naturally arose, and the bishop wishing to be sarcastic with the layman, called him in some correspondence, in a sneering manner, "Jean de Riquetti, a merchant of Marseilles;" to which Jean replied, "I am, or was, a merchant of police here (a high office eligible for the nobility alone), much in the same manner as my Lord the Bishop is a merchant of holy water." A bold man, evidently; who saw his own path clearly, followed it, and truckled to no man. A sudden anti-royalist reaction, however, drove him away from his estates for several years; until at length, in extreme old age, he who had held out the town for Charles IX. saw its gates open to receive the representative of the good Henri Quatre, and himself and family reinstated in their former glory: having beheld which, he departed in peace elsewhither. Honoré II., his son, succeeded him, and was a royalist also, and when Louis XIII. besieged Montpellier, he headed a gratulatory deputation to him; and the monarch took his son to court, being pleased with the father, who died in 1622. Thomas, his son,

was educated at court, and introduced liveries into Marseilles for the first time; his own colour being crimson: he lived in magnificent state at Marseilles, and wasted the estates grievously in so doing. Apropos of this man, a word may be said of the wives of the Mirabeaux. They seemed to select women of the same high and dauntless spirit—women who would have appeared as men, mated with any other race than Riquettis. Thomas married Anne, daughter (as the *Morning Post* of those days worded it) of the "magnificent Lord Pompey de Pontèves and de Bous, and the magnificent Lady Margaret de la Baume de Suze." This lady coming out of church once, and going to the holy water font, when a lady stepped before to cross herself, thrust her on one side with a blow, saying, "Here, as in the army, the *baggage* goes behind." With such mothers and such fathers, no wonder that from the Riquettis sprang the king of the revolution. In the days of this Thomas, there were again anti-royalist disturbances, and he and his son were wounded in quelling a revolt. This was, however, compensated by Louis the XIV. then a youth, lodging, in his visit to Marseilles, at the house of Thomas, together with the Queen-dowager and Cardinal Mazarin. The constitution of Marseilles was altered by this royal visit: the office of First Con-

sul was abolished, and a merchant corporation of aldermen (elected by tradesmanship and obesity of course), and such like, established in its stead. This caused the Riquettis to take less interest in the town, and devote themselves more to Mirabeau and its lonely castle, standing greyly on a barren rock in a secluded valley. The king, however, left a patent, erecting Mirabeau into a marquisate; with which title of first Marquis de Mirabeau, Honoré III., son of Thomas, took the family estates. These being entirely dissipated and disarranged by his father's reckless profusion, Honoré, like a brave man, drew in at once all unnecessary expenditure, and withdrew for several years to retirement at the castle, where he studied the classic writers diligently. He emerged, however from this seclusion with great pomp, on being elected first Procurator of Provence; and, while he held that office, resided at Aix. As if to compensate for his hermit-like manhood, his decline was one continued scene of action—action after the Riquetti manner—hot, bold, and haughty. When the Count of Hamilton advanced against Aix, he found the gates closed: and Honoré, as procurator, went forth to explain the reason. Hamilton, in true English haughtiness, demanded the reason of the closure of the gates; but was surprised when Honoré answered him, "Young man, lower your

tone, I beg!": and he had to lower it. Shortly after, taking a petition from Marseilles to court, the minister to whom he presented it received him with ministerial frigidity, and even insolent haughtiness. "I see, sir," cried Honoré, proudly, "that it is better to treat with the king personally than with his servants; I shall therefore proceed to his majesty." Upon which the minister, being frightened, recalled him, and granted his request. He died at Marseilles in 1687, and was succeeded by the celebrated Jean-Antoine, surnamed *Col d'Argent*, grandfather of Mirabeau.

The life of this individual has been written by him whose life we in our turn humbly essay to shadow forth, and is a readable work of some hundred and fifty pages. This man, save his grandson, was the most illustrious of his race: he possessed all the qualities of that race in a finer and more vivid degree. At twenty-one he became marquis; he was tall and imposing in his stature, elegant in carriage; with a polished manner, ready wit, indomitable daring, and firm decision of character: and yet, with all these advantages, he did not marry till he was forty; wounded, crippled, and his disposition warped by trial and danger. Like all the nobility, he entered the army: but, *un*like all the nobility, he suffered as much from actual warfare as any sol-

dier in any age. There are many anecdotes, all demonstrating his courage and wit in his early army days. One day there was a review, and just when the troops had defiled before the crown inspector, Jean-Antoine, their captain, cantered up. Dismounting from his charger, he went to the inspector to notify his presence; but was informed, that, not having been there when the troops were inspected, he had been marked as absent, and would be reported so. The major standing near, with whom the strange captain was no doubt a favourite, commenced pleading with the inspector to change the report, but fruitlessly; when Jean-Antoine marching up to the official said, "I am absent then, sir?" "You are, sir," was the reply. "In which case this occurs in my absence," whereupon he inflicted a severe horse-whipping upon the man in authority before the whole parade. His early life is one series of such scenes; all original; all more or less noble. But in battles was his chief business: he fought incessantly. The Duc de Vendôme used to speak of him as "his right-hand man." He took an active part in numerous battles most celebrated in those days, but of which the very names are fading away now: in all his campaigns he was ever the same sprightly, dignified, fiery, original man—the one man of his corps. In the

intervals of active service, he rushed down to Marseilles to half-kill excise officers, punish refractory priests, discharge tyrannous stewards, and generally superintend his estates. In 1705, however, when he was thirty-nine and unmarried, his life was placed in the greatest jeopardy at the battle of Cassano; which took place under the command of the Duc de Vendôme, with the Austrian forces under Prince Eugene, near the Lake of Garda. The brave Jean-Antoine on this occasion performed almost incredible feats of valour—carrying bridges, storming mills, mingling in hand-to-hand death-battle heroically, receiving *twenty-seven* wounds in two hours' fighting; until, sinking bleeding upon the ground, he was borne away for dead. But although he was covered with wounds, and had his neck nearly severed in twain, dead he was not. He had to reproduce himself in the shape of another Marquis de Mirabeau: and so he had to get a silver collar for his neck, and balsam for his wounds, and recover as soon and as entirely as he could. He did recover; but was ever after, of course, a broken down man, and a man of strong splenetic eccentricity. To the end of his life, he spoke of this battle as "the day when I was killed." The year following, being in a weak state of body, he retired to Digne to drink the waters. At this place, he became acquainted

with Mademoiselle de Castellane, the last descendant of an ancient but very poor house. Money alliances Jean-Antoine scorned, and he, therefore, determined to marry her. But his courtship was abrupt and singular: it consisted of a proposal to the lady to marry him clandestinely, without the knowledge of any of her relatives, till the day after the ceremony. This was naturally refused, and the hero of the silver-collar, to forget his disappointment, made a visit to Paris. The Duc de Vendôme, proud of his fellow-soldier and veteran, introduced him to the king, Louis XIV. in all his splendour. But the infamous court, and court-purlieus, were not pleasing to the proud Riquetti; and when the monarch was complimenting him blandly upon his prodigious valour and many services, he surprised the whole court, by exclaiming, indignantly, "Yes, sire! and had I deserted my standard, and come up hither and bribed some prostitute, I should have had promotion, and fewer wounds!"* A man like that is not fit for court society: he is fit alone for man's society; and so the choleric marquis was despatched to Provence once more, as soon as convenient. On his return, he contrived to conclude his marriage with Mademoiselle de Castellane; whom he espoused in May 1708. Several

* Fils Adoptif, i. 140.

children succeeded this union; of whom all died early, save three—two of whose names will frequently occur in these pages. He pursued his military occupation for a few years more, and then, retiring into private life, employed himself in all manner of quarrels and uproars: in which he ever acted as a Riquetti alone could do; until, in 1737, he sank to his rest, at the age of seventy-one. This was a brave man and a true man: the very man one could have supposed as ancestral to Mirabeau: a man whose memoirs, well-written, might make as agreeable and altogether a less sensual volume than those of the Count de Grammont: detailing the story of a man you could admire and love. The names of Jean-Antoine's three surviving sons were Victor, Marquis de Mirabeau, born in Provence, on the 5th October 1715; Jean-Antoine-Joseph-Charles-Elzéar (!) born in Provence two years later; and Louis-Alexandre, born in 1724. Of this latter, it may be sufficient to say, that he was a knight of Malta—a captain; fought at several battles; married a lady on whom virtue sat easily, by no means incommoding; was hunted out of France by his eldest brother; and died, estranged from his family in 1761, without issue. The next elder to him, with the astonishingly lengthy prenomina, was a much more amiable character; and, as he survived his

nephew, the great Mirabeau, and was throughout life intimately connected with his destiny, claims more notice. He was a knight of Malta, as usual, at three years old, and early in life entered the galley service; he was at an engagement, and taken prisoner by the English. After his release, he rose to be captain, and was appointed Governor of Guadaloupe. Ill health, however, drove him home, and after a little more warfare, he accepted the office of Bailli of Mirabeau, and retired for the remainder of his days to the castle thereat. By the name of the bailli, he was ever after known. In character, he was gentle for a Mirabeau; but had still all their ruggedness and obstinacy: insomuch that he could not flatter, for a long space, Madame Pompadour, when he had an interview with that illustrious harlot, but broke into a hot reply, which effectually ruined his prospects at court. He was lively, witty, and affectionate; and it was to him that the marquis addressed the shoals of epistles, from whence the history of Mirabeau has to be gleaned.

But it is Victor himself, the eldest, who—both from his being Mirabeau's father, and for his own singular and, at bottom, loveable character—more particularly interests us now. Stranger man than this marquis never came forth upon the earth. Perverse, crabbed, obstinate, vehement-

tempered, and tyrannous, he was one mass of conflicting elements confined in too narrow space, and ever bursting out, often in fiery brilliance, often in empty wind, and oftener still in lurid smoke. Professing in his theories unlimited love for his fellow-creatures *en masse*, and being known by the title of the Friend of Man, there was no individual with whom he was in daily intercourse with whom he did not quarrel: excepting, perhaps, a questionable lady and her allies. He believed himself to be the regenerator of France; was determined that all his relatives or friends should be *him;* and when they would be themselves, he had one invariable specific, a *lettre-de-cachet* and prison cooling: until, at length, the minister informed him that he had had no less than *fifty-four* of these missives, and that more could not be granted. With his wife he had a fifteen years' law-suit and quarrel, of scandalous recrimination and mutual severity; until the marquis lost the day, and the marchioness obtained a separation. As a writer, he was by no means despicable: but it was his becoming an economist and literary man, that "soured the genial current of his soul," by making every man who could not digest his *Ephémérides*, or *Leçons Economiques*, his personal enemy. He was a warm, unwearied partisan of the theories of Dr. Quesnay: a kind of romantic

Benthamism; a barren system, wherein feudalism and philanthropic reform are endeavoured to be united. He poured forth volume after volume of his rough and vapoury essays, with untiring rapidity; which were eagerly read by the followers of Dr. Quesnay, whose successor the marquis was looked upon to be. In all, they numbered about eighty volumes: but written in such a manner! Conceive, if such a thing be conceivable, Goethe or Carlyle sitting down in a state of intoxication to write a volume in a night; pouring forth copiously the ravings of their distorted intellects; dusky, unintelligible, unfathomable, but with every here and there a ray of the sober intellect and mighty genius of the man flooding in among it. Such a thing conceived, and the marquis's eighty economy-tomes lie before you. He writes straight forward to his goal with a headlong impetus: tedious, dull, and unreadable for the most part, but flinging off, every now and then, a scintillating spark, a real gem of genius. Besides these volumes, he wrote twice the quantity of letters, to all manner of persons, in the same murky style of composition: for the weakness of his character was a want of reticence. Whatever happed, silence to him was impossible; and so, for some years, we have a ceaseless tide of epistles, hissing, screaming, moaning, whining, snivelling, or swear-

ing at the passing events, political or private. But his character will unfold itself in his connection with his son. His story is soon told. At three he was a knight of Malta; at fourteen he entered the army as an ensign, and soon rose to a captain. He was at a few battles, and was honoured with the Grand Cross of St. Louis. At twenty-two he succeeded to the title and estate; and thenceforth devoted himself body and soul to the propagation of his theories on political economy. At twenty-seven, conceiving like Benedick that "the world must be peopled," (for the Friend of Man had small love for woman in his constitution: for which defect, perhaps, his son compensated!) and deeming, moreover, that the Mirabeaux must not die out, he led to the altar, Marie-Geneviève de Vassan, of high birth and great fortune, but not beautiful. She was a maid-widow when he married her, having been united to the Marquis de Saulvebœuf at twelve, who died before he consummated the union. Connected with this marriage, the marquis manifested an amusing instance of paltry credulity: being anxious for a *son*, the Duc de Nivernois informed him of a certain method (not known to us, and therefore we cannot insert it: did we know it, however, it might perhaps be *un*insertable) whereby the parent could ensure the masculinity of his child. He

had had one boy and four girls (the boy dead), when this plan was communicated to him. He adopted it; and Gabriel Honoré, and afterwards Boniface, being the result, he became a firm believer in its efficacy: accordingly, when his eldest child was married to M. du Saillaint, he informed the happy bridegroom of his wonderful secret: the bridegroom, son-loving, gleefully and faithfully put it into practice, and the result was—a nice family of *eighteen daughters!*

Shortly before his marriage, he purchased an estate not far from Sens, called Bignon, and took an hotel in Paris; being the first Mirabeau who had resided fixedly away from Provence, since Azzo Riquetti first entered it. This was one of the marquis's many incongruities; for his own theory advocated the strict following out of the spirit and habits of ancestors. At Bignon he lived in a state of quarrel with his wife and all around him, labouring at his delusive task: a brave man asceticised, a good man marred, a light struggling in coppery fogs and pestilential mists. Thus, from the days when the Arighettis were hurled forth from Florence, through Henri Quatre's battle days, and through many centuries, we have brought this singular race down even to an era of Louis Quinze, and sceptical Voltairism. They have been fierce-

tempered, wild-blooded, lion-hearted, noble-minded: truly a right illustrious house of manly men. Victor, their gnarled representative, has now had five children, his heir dead: a somewhat fruitful marriage. But, now in the year 1749, when cold ice-bearing February is going out, and bluff March coming in roaringly, the Friend of Man is lookingly anxiously forward; for another child is expected: an heir is wanted, and Nivernois promises that this *shall* be a male. Madame la Marquise, weakened with a stormy pregnancy, saunters slowly in the bowery groves and on the stone terraces of Bignon, silent, contemplative; with such thoughts as a mother can imagine. That a child is on the eve of being born she feels, she knows: that that child shall, with his wild forest-roar and his giant intellect, shake the world, she knows not, feels not, dreams not. Yet it must be so. The times are pregnant with the gestation-product of the crimes of a thousand years: even now, the world is restless, anticipating the hour; and ere very long that hour shall come, and amid the cries of a rapturous France and a wonder-stricken Europe, REVOLUTION will be born. And lo! so inscrutably moves the Lord Eternal, on the eighth day of March, in remote Bignon, a woman lies down-stricken, crying in her awful travail-throes, who shall bear the man to rule, to direct, and to compel it!

CHAPTER III.

THE HEIR WITH NO FRIENDS.

1749—1769.

Gabriel-Honoré de Riquetti, Count of Mirabeau, was born at Bignon, on the 9th of March, 1749. Poor Marie-Geneviève, his mother, had no easy time of it. All political births are dangerous, if not death-births; and the birth of this great political king was perilous in an alarming degree. During the period of her gestation, the marchioness had not enjoyed good health, so that she was but ill prepared to undergo what she *had* to undergo: for the unnatural magnitude of the child's head caused her much torture, and placed her life in imminent peril. It had, perhaps, been happier for her had she died then: but she did not, and the child was brought safely into the world.

When the marquis went to see his son, the

nurses thought it necessary to prepare him by saying, "Do not be afraid:" and well they might, for the child was of a size and vigour never before known—at least never chronicled. He had an immense head, almost amounting to a deformity; a twisted foot; two molar teeth were found cut, and his tongue was tied by the *frænum*. It is very remarkable that the greatest modern orator should have been born tongue-tied. A wonderful being, however, this was—wonderful at his birth as well as exit; but trebly wonderful in his peculiar life-lot.

There are few chronicles regarding his early days: the marquis, gossiping on every little paltry subject, forgets for the most part this most important subject in France. At a year old he is described as an enormous fellow, whose pastime consisted chiefly in beating his nurse. At three years old he lay in a precarious state for many days with the smallpox, confluent and malignant, preying upon his very life. His mother, in mistaken kindness, poured some quack ointments upon his face, so that, when he recovered, his features were disfigured and deformed by huge seams and furrows; so much so that, at five years of age, his father, in describing him to his uncle the bailli, thus speaks, "Your nephew is as ugly as the nephew of the devil."

It was now time to commence the instruction of this ugly being. On this topic the marquis was decided, even before his birth. He was determined to beat nature; to fight and wrestle with her; banish her from the young count, and mould him entirely in the model of his father; so that, when he died, his son might succeed him as chief of the economists. In this fight the marquis was to be defeated, not without much struggling; and Mirabeau was to be as God saw fit he should be, and not as the marquis would have fain cramped and docked him to: and, as in all fights, the battle-field is sorely torn and wounded by the conflict, so Mirabeau, in this struggle, suffered all the grievances of the encounter.

M. Poisson (a kind of factotum to the marquis) was delegated to the responsible office of tutor. He seems, from what can be gleaned concerning him, to have been an amiable man; loving his pupil sincerely, taking much trouble with him; and, as a natural consequence, Mirabeau progressed under his tutorage. He was, however, more a brilliant child than one of steady learning; and manifested more vivacity, and even wit, than knowledge and education. His wondering father (who had raised a spirit he feared even then, and consequently all his life strove to repress or keep down the same) wrote generally twice per week

to the bailli; in most of which letters he gives some notice of Mirabeau; usually calling him "a marmot," and such like epithets—never by his own name. These accounts varied alternately as the child pleased him, or as his own *Ephémérides* succeeded: "All Paris," writes he, "speaks of his precocity;" shortly after, "The marmot has all at once grown a wag, very inquisitive, and very troublesome."

About this time Mirabeau gave several instances of this precocity. One day, before company, he was asked to write something (he was then six),—he accordingly addressed the following remarks to his tutor.

"Sir, I beg you to be careful with your writing, and not to make blots upon your copy; be attentive to what any one does; obey your father, your master, your mother, and never contradict. Have no deceit; but honour above all things. Attack no one, unless they attack you; defend your country; be not arbitrary with the servants, neither familiar; conceal your neighbour's faults, because you may fall into the same."

Rather remarkable for so young a child. About the same time also he was confirmed by a cardinal; and, at a large supper given in honour of the cardinal's presence and the event, surprised and annoyed the room by a too-acute reply. Explain-

ing theology to the young confirmed, some one remarked that God never made a contradiction; and, on Mirabeau inquiring what a contradiction was, instanced a stick which had only one end; "but," cried the boy, "*is not a miracle a stick with only one end?*"

Day by day as he grew in body, he grew also in spirit and wit, and soon became quite too self-willed and rough for the meek Poisson. "He is never out of punishment," said the marquis: and spoke truly. The chief error of his father was in being extreme to mark what was done amiss: the smallest child's frolic he handled with the severity of a father dealing with the headlong dissipation of a grown-up son; and any sensible parent knows that the great secret of educating children is a judicious blindness to faults now and then.

At ten years of age, Mirabeau's life was again in much peril, from a very violent fever, under which he suffered for a long period. When his son's life was thus in danger the marquis awakened to a little regret, though it was chiefly on account of the succession; but after his recovery every particle of love seemed to be banished from his father's constitution, and sour perverseness implanted there instead. One of Mirabeau's first characteristics, manifested after this recovery, was directly in

opposition to the whole economic scheme of the marquis; who was sorely exasperated by seeing this dereliction from the appointed path: it was the habit of expending all his monies upon objects of charity, and even collecting for such. "*Manual* charities," writes the marquis, "are most positively in opposition to my principles." Truly so: a charitable *theory* being of course far better.

When Mirabeau was eleven, prizes were given at Bignon for various feats, and he was so fortunate as to gain a hat for running. He immediately turned to an old bystander, who had but a poor cap, and covering him with the prize hat, said, "Here, take this. I have not two heads!" "He appeared at that moment," writes the son-producer Nivernois, "as the emperor of the world!"

Nevertheless, to this child, only eleven, beloved by everybody, with a fine, open, free, generous soul, the marquis manifested a daily deepening aversion; calling him the foulest epithets—epithets which the most degraded sexagenarian blackguard could no more than have merited.

At fifteen, having entirely outgrown the control of Poisson, he was removed to a military school at Paris, kept by the Abbé Choquart; who had orders, above all things, not to spare the rod. Another still more bitter punishment was inflicted upon him; that of being entered under

the assumed name of Peter Buffière (from an estate of the family in the Limousin), with the promise that he should resume his own when he had proved himself deserving thereof.

The Abbé Choquart, by nature and occupation, was a stern man, and was, by the marquis's account of his new pupil, prepared to exercise all his sternness upon Mirabeau. But one glance upon the frank, pock-seamed, but still genius-beaming features of his charge, told him a truer tale than his father's prejudiced jabbering. He was not severe, nor was severeness wanted; for Mirabeau devoted himself with unwearied industry to study, and manifested an aptitude and a memory which astonished and delighted. Besides the dead languages, he studied English, Italian, German, and Spanish; in all of which he grew a proficient. But his darling study was mathematics, united with architectural drawing. He was a musician, and even composed some few melodies; while in all the gentlemanly sports he excelled his fellow-students. In short, nothing to the inexhaustible mælstrom-appetite of Mirabeau came amiss. All was grist to *his* mill; and he filled himself with whatever came to hand, good or bad; until, when at forty, he stood with his hand upon the bridle of a Revolution, to control it and govern it, no man in Europe had such an immense heteroge-

neous agglomeration of learning, human, devilish, and divine.

The imprudent kindness of the marchioness contributed at this time to embitter the marquis still further against his unfortunate child. Shortly before the birth of Mirabeau, the marquis, who divided his time between Paris and Bignon, imagined that it would not be disagreeable to have a wife at both ends; and, as the law would not allow this, he kept his legal wife at Bignon to produce Mirabeaux and Barrel-Mirabeaux, and another lady, by name de Pailly, who performed all the functions of a wife at his hôtel in Paris, without the expense and formula of hymeneal rites. She was young, beautiful, artful, designing; and in her hands the gnarled Friend of Man was a puppet. It is to her hatred of Mirabeau that the harsh and unjustifiable conduct of the marquis is attributable. With this arrangement the marchioness kept peace; but when her husband, adding insult to injury, brought this harlot wife to Bignon, the fierce indignation of an injured woman arose in her soul, and she left him in disgust and wrathful exasperation. A quarrel ensued, which lasted for nearly twenty years, and which ended in the marquis being conquered. Mirabeau, being bare of cash, applied to his mother, whom he always loved dearly; and she, in opposition to

the commands of the marquis, supplied him liberally. On this gaining the ears of the marquis, he burst into violent anger (being roused thereto by Madame de Pailly, whose interest it was, of course, to widen the breach), which vented itself in fierce words towards the marchioness, and in increased severity to his son; who was prohibited from writing to anybody, and denied all subsidies. He, moreover, meditated some sweeping punishment; which was, however, changed for the more rational idea of entering him in the army, he being then eighteen.

Accordingly, on the 19th of July, Mirabeau joined a regiment (as a volunteer, bearing no commission, but being a kind of attaché) then commanded by the Marquis de Lambert, stationed at Saintes, on the river Charente, and not far from Rochelle. This regiment was selected by the marquis, because de Lambert was the most rigorous commander and the strictest disciplinarian in the service. For about a year everything was favourable regarding the young subaltern: even his father expressed himself satisfied, and procured him a commission. It was a delusive calm, however, and a storm quickly succeeded it: for which the marquis had but to thank his own parsimonious inconsistency. With the most exalted notion of his rank and influence, and anxious

that his son should maintain the honour of the family, he refused to supply him with funds anything like adequate to his name and descent: for though he bore the cognomen of Buffière, it was well known of what lineage he came. The consequence was that Mirabeau contracted a few debts, and then, falling into the hands of those black-legs who always live upon young officers, lost forty louis at play. All this was a mere peccadillo; it was nevertheless treated as a sin unpardonable, and a *lettre-de-cachet* hovered over him from his father. Moreover, it was made the subject of the commander's inquiries; and as Grévin (a creature of Madame de Pailly, and an agent, or rather ruler of the marquis, who resided with Mirabeau, keeping charge of him and reporting to the father) advocated severe measures, he was rigorously dealt with. But another case followed up this—an *affaire de cœur*. M. de Lambert was paying his court to the daughter of an archer at Saintes, when, unfortunately Mirabeau beheld and fell in love with her, instanter. Armed with his immense power of ugliness, his eloquence, and, above all, his open air of manly nature, with no subterfuge or sham detectable, he laid siege to her heart, which yielded, forcing the colonel to retire before the sub-lieutenant. Burning with rage, de Lam-

bert revenged himself by having a gross caricature of Mirabeau drawn, which, being circulated through the regiment, made him a general butt for ridicule and insult; while, at the same time, the colonel used all the innumerable opportunities which his commandership gave him to tyrannize over and to wound his rival.

Finding such a life unbearable, Mirabeau left his duty and fled to Paris; where, placing himself under the protection of the Duc de Nivernois, he complained of the severity with which he had been treated. M. de Saillant, who had married his sister, acting for the marquis, confined him in the duc's hôtel, and then carried him down once more to Saintes, and delivered him over to the military tribunal, who passed the sentence customary in such cases,—a short confinement. This, however, did by no means satisfy de Lambert, who panted for an overwhelming revenge; and Grévin, miscalled his mentor, abetted him in his attempts to obtain a decisive vengeance. De Lambert demanded some arrangement from the marquis, and Grévin backed him by sending daily accounts of the extreme perverseness of Mirabeau; calling him a "horrible monster," and other similar names, to demonstrate the applicability whereof no one fact, no proof was ever adduced: but having a perpetual and all-influ-

ential ally in Madame de Pailly, they soon succeeded in working up the marquis to the necessary pitch of wrath.

In this state he decided upon imprisoning his son—more sinned against than sinning—in the prison of the Isle of Rhé. Accordingly, one morning a note was placed in the hands of Mirabeau, which he was requested to deliver to M. de Senneterre at Rochelle; upon delivering which he found he had been his own executioner, since the letter contained an order for the arrest and transfer to the Isle of Rhé of Monsieur Peter Buffière, which was instantly complied with.

The bailli of Aulan, governor of the fortress, was charged to confine him closely, allowing no relaxation; and also to watch him narrowly, and report the result of those watchings. Should they be unfavourable, the scheme was to send him to Surinam, where blood-fevers, malaria, and all manner of diseases were rampant; so that, to use the cold-blooded summing up of the bailli (who was led by the marquis; having never seen his nephew), "we may never behold him again on the horizon:" which speech and purpose, that a respectable fiend might, without inconsistency, have patronized, was duly revealed to Mirabeau; not tending to add pleasure to his prison-life, and infuse charity and love within him.

To us this picture of young Mirabeau at twenty, is one of the most melancholy in the annals of biography. He stands alone with fierce passions, but a noble heart and intellect, and has never had all his life one true guiding and correcting friend, to curb the one, to elevate and exercise the other. Whatever crimes Mirabeau might hereafter commit we could forgive him: for how stands he at present? His father hates him, noting every foible, every blemish; and for the follies of so young a lad there is no friendly advocating voice to speak one extenuating word: but there are many eager to blacken and deface his character, ever more and more; for the marquis has money, and when his son is in punishment squanders it on others: therefore have these others a game to play, and they play it well. Grévin* hated him: we have just said why. Prostitute de Pailly hated him, for a similar reason; and in the hands of these two evil spirits the marquis is as clay in the hand of the potter, fashioning not for good but for evil. He condemns a son with a promising genius, unheard, unseen even; purposes his death by the putrefactions and corruptions of a poisonous climate, and loads him to

* About a year after this, Grévin visited the bailli, who remonstrated with his brother for placing any reliance on the word of such a fellow as he found him to be.

all men with obloquy aud contempt. Looking at this injured young Mirabeau at twenty, with that open soul and dawning genius of his—with his wild Provençal blood, the blood of all the Riquettis', running riot through his veins; uncounselled, unloved, yet loving; with his thoughtlessness reprehended as vice; foibles punished as crimes: looking upon and bearing this in mind, the questionable actions of Mirabeau grow less questionable, and the leviathanic incontinent of forty appears as the only result expectable from such treatment. He is one in a thousand, who could, with such a prison-life of it, survive till forty: one in ten thousand who could have lived through that, and been such a wholesome man after all. Had he been a cynic, an atheist, a man-hater, one could well nigh have pardoned him.

O reader, who lolling in thine easy chair, readest in some half-true history of this Mirabeau, of his liaisons, his amours, his vices, and with strong invectives condemnest him; pause a little, and remember this portion of his life-story: remember these things: that he came of a fiery kindred—that a greater than us all saw fit to breathe into *him* the *hottest* soul of all his too-hot race—that in his infancy and golden youth-hood, fair seed-time of his life, no mother taught him godliness; no father pointed out the path of virtue,

honour, and integrity; but that villains maligned him; that his friends deserted him; that his father abused him, and hunted him to almost death itself. Weigh against it, how that thou wert born in a chiller climate, of a colder nature; how in thine infancy, morn and even, thy prayers, childlike and beautiful, rose up to heaven; how a mother kissed, a father blessed thee; how the grand God's book was ever in thine hand; the grand Christ-precepts ever in thy mouth; how thy youth has been one calm instruction in goodness and in virtue; and then, ask thyself, how, by what law, right, claim, or reason, thou darest to judge this Mirabeau!

CHAPTER IV.

CORSICA—MIRABEAU—PARIS—AND THE COURT.

1769—1771.

At the Isle of Rhé, as elsewhere, Mirabeau won the friendship of all around him. At Saintes, as his enemy de Lambert was forced to confess, he "divided the town and province between himself and reason:" reason clearly a loser. And scarcely had he been a week in the fortress of Rhé, before he was permitted by the bailli of Aulan to promenade the citadel: to the vexation of the marquis, who had expressly prohibited any kindness or relaxation; and he had not been a prisoner two months ere this same bailli became his firm friend, and wrote to his father, entreating him to withdraw his *lettre-de-cachet*, and restore Mirabeau to liberty.

All this time Mirabeau was in much uncertainty regarding his future destination; determined alone

on one thing, *not* to return to de Lambert's regiment: "I swear upon mine honour," he writes to his mother, "an oath which I will never break, that I will resign my commission, and go abroad, if they force me to serve under his command."

But his affairs, chiefly owing to the favourable report of the Governor, took a turn much more pleasing to the peculiar temperament of Mirabeau; The war, with which the readers of Boswell's Johnson are so well acquainted, was then raging in Corsica, and it was decided that Mirabeau should be enrolled in some regiment destined for active service in that island. The Legion of Lorraine, commanded by the Baron de Viomenil was selected, and he was entered as second lieutenant in the infantry.

About the 20th March, Mirabeau bade farewell to the Isle of Rhé and its kind governor, and landed at Rochelle. Scarcely had he arrived there, before he had the misfortune to embroil himself in a quarrel, the result of which was a duel. This event was cited by Grévin, as another proof of his innate badness, and gave rise to many severe measures on the part of the marquis. And yet Mirabeau was blameless in the affair; which was as follows:—When at Saintes, an officer had been cashiered for dishonourable and disgraceful conduct; and on Mirabeau's arrival at Rochelle, this

man meeting him, manifested an inclination for establishing an intimacy between them. His advances being judiciously repulsed by Mirabeau, the officer, in passion, challenged him. A duel ensued, in which the foolish aggressor was very justly wounded; receiving a lesson against pugnacity, we will hope, not soon forgotten.

The embarkation was to take place at Toulon. Mirabeau had, therefore, a long and tedious journey across the country; having to traverse the mountains of Auvergne, and the Languedoc chain. It was not unattended with danger even; for the winter had been remarkably severe, and in some passes the snow lay as deep as twelve feet. At the same time his sister Louisa, then fifteen, was being married to M. de Cabris, and all was festivity at Bignon; where the son and heir was forgotten in the gay rejoicings. This Madame de Cabris will cross us once again ere long.

He arrived at Toulon early in April, and left that port on the 16th for Corsica. That the war then raging there was one of injustice and tyranny there can be no doubt: but a young man escaping from a prison does not weigh such things very much. Mirabeau himself afterwards regretted the share he took in the subjugation of the Corsicans, reproaching himself therewith from the tribune of

the National Assembly. In this campaign he distinguished himself by his courage, zeal, and general nobility of conduct; his commander, chosen for his severity and firmness, became his warm and changeless friend; as did also the lieutenant-general of the army, and many other illustrious officers. He, moreover, devoted his leisure to study, and wrote, during his year's sojourn on the island, a history thereof, not by any means despicable. He is also accused of some amorous feats during his residence; but there is no validity attached to them, they being proofless: and in Mirabeau's life there is such a sublime multitude of the like, that it is quite superfluous to believe any more than can be duly proven.

[1770.] On the 8th of May he re-arrived at Toulon, having strict orders not on any account to allow himself to be recognised. Nevertheless, he was discovered by several old school-comrades; which of course gave umbrage to his tender parent. Having received permission to visit his uncle the bailli, at the castle of Mirabeau, he went to that individual to demand an interview. This was granted, and on the 14th he visited him. As the people of Saintes—the archer's daughter—the Bailli of Aulan—the Baron de Vioménil—so was the Bailli of Mirabeau: he became, save in

one or two instances, the staunch supporter and admirer of his nephew. His letters to the marquis about this time, manifest a man almost admiring to dotage.

"I found him," says he, "ugly; but he has not a bad physiognomy: and he has, behind the ravages of the smallpox, and features which are much changed, something graceful, intellectual, and noble." Again, "He appears to me to have a sensitive heart: as for wit, the devil has not so much. I repeat to you, either he is the most adroit and consummate humbug in the universe, or else he will be the best subject in Europe for a naval or military commander, for a minister, a chancellor, a pope: in short, anything he will. You were something (to the marquis) at twenty-one, but not half what he is." Again, "I can swear to you, that we have found in him a little vivacity and fire, *but not one word which did not denote uprightness of heart, elevation of soul, power of genius; all, perhaps, a little exuberant.*"

Such was the testimony of the bailli to his noble nephew: and what does the marquis? Does he write for his son, and give his parental love and confidence so long and so unjustly retarded? Not so: he despatches a series of the stupidest letters imaginable, declining any connection with M. Buffière at present, but strongly urging that out-

cast to apply himself zealously to the study of his father's multitudinous productions.

"I wish," he writes to the bailli, "you would make him read the *Economiques* and the *Ephémérides.* Tell your nephew, that wolf's cub, who always writes to me off-hand, and never deferentially, that the young Prince of Baden has sent me an 'Economic Summary'; and that he who succeeds to my name, should occupy my place in that branch of science. Let him read the *Economiques* and the editor's preface: it is the most elaborate work I ever wrote; though I was ill at the time."

But to the clear-seeing vigorous intellect of such a man as Mirabeau, this sterile and even cold-blooded system of economics, whereby man is not permitted to be different, cold, hot, lukewarm, good, bad, nonentic, the child of destiny, of God's will; but rather a being, eating, drinking, marrying, begetting, thinking, by fixed rules and laws, always with an eye to the revenue and population tables: an intricate machine worked by some cunning, little logicist; such a course of study could, to such a man, present small satisfaction. Mirabeau did *not* study his father's book; but, on the contrary, openly expressed the profoundest contempt for his theories, and panted eagerly for active military service, or any *real work:* which

depreciation of his works tended not a little to exasperate the marquis. On account of his valour and valuable services at Corsica, having been presented to the king, he was at this time appointed a captain in the regiment of dragoons; which appointment, however, did not call him to any duties, being a sinecure.

Mirabeau had resided half a year with the bailli, during which time he had made himself acquainted with the whole family estate; forming energetic plans for its improvement: meditating the embankment of a rapid and overflowing river: in short, transacting the entire work of the bailli to his infinite satisfaction. "I assure you," writes the bailli, "that with the exception of his having used my eight months' stock of paper in as many weeks, I am well satisfied with him; his is a head of fresh verdure, and full of vivacity and fire; but I see nothing therein save verdure, which will, I think, become fruitful."

The legion of Lorraine arriving from Hières, Mirabeau left the bailli to join his regiment. But his uncle did not allow the interest his presence had excited to cool in absence: twice a week, sometimes more frequently, he addressed lengthy letters to his brother, laying before him ever more forcibly, the good conduct of his son; and praying for his recall. Mirabeau had won the love and

veneration of all the peasants and inhabitants on or near the estate, as well as of the higher classes. "Oh, my lord," said the former to the bailli, when inquiring concerning his nephew from them, "you should have followed him as we have, to know how good he is!" The bailli also made inquiries, through his chaplain the Abbé Castagny, from his messmates. "Why, sir," they replied, "he is a lad confoundedly active; and then he has the wit of three hundred thousand devils, and is, moreover, a right-brave fellow."

At length, about September, after a large volume of epistolary remonstrances had passed from the bailli, the marquis, having business to transact in the Limousin, in which he fancied Mirabeau might aid him, decided upon allowing him to behold the parental physiognomy, and fall down and worship the sublime economist, had he felt so disposed: which he did not.

Mirabeau departed from Provence by the same route as he had taken to reach it from Rochelle, passing through Languedoc and Auvergne, but in different weather. After experiencing two accidents—the one, a horse breaking its leg under him, thereby bruising him fearfully; the other, his post-chaise breaking down with him, which completed his bodily overthrow—he reached St. Léonard, and from thence sent for his father's

assistance. By this assistance, he was conveyed by slow stages to Aigueperse; which place he gained on the 21st of September, completely recovered: and where he beheld the Friend of Man.

According to his own account, the marquis received him kindly, "even with tenderness"; and was much pleased with him: so much so, that, at the solicitation of Madame du Saillant, Mirabeau's noble-hearted sister, he consented to his assuming his title of Count of Mirabeau.

[1771.] Shortly after his arrival, a visitation of Providence gave scope to Mirabeau's activity. A dearth fell upon the land, and the peasants of Limousin were starving: and might have starved perchance, had not a man like he been upon the spot. Even the marquis was forced to admire his son's energy, genius, and beneficent activity. He persuaded the marquis to buy a supply of rice, and also give employment to the unfortunate people: and, having received permission to do so, put his plans into action: he worked with the people, talked to them, cheered them, and partook of the same food. So that wherever Mirabeau appeared, faint hearts received courage, and the sorrowful grew glad. Not alone to mere acts of charity were his energies directed. The marquis had contemplated establishing a court of arbitration, wherein all quarrels should be adjusted free of charge: this he had given

up as *impossible.* But the design coming across Mirabeau, he at once saw its feasibility; set himself energetically to the task, and established the court successfully in a little time; to the surprise of the marquis, who cried, half-admiringly, half-wonderingly, half-jealously, "*He is the demon of the impossible!*": meaning thereby, that in *his* dictionary that word was not inserted.

During his residence at Aiguéperse, commenced the great law-quarrel between his father and mother; which travelled slowly, but with acerbity, over fifteen dreary years. The extreme ill health of the Marchioness of Vassan, mother of the Marchioness of Mirabeau, and life-possessor of all her property, had called the marquis to Limousin, in which province she resided. The Marchioness of Mirabeau, forgetting her quarrel, also came—came not with a desire of reconciliation, but simply to claim her heritage in opposition to her husband. The Marchioness of Vassan died, and the rich heritage lay between the claimants. Separation both of body and property, demanded the marchioness of Mirabeau. Of body, with pleasure, replied the uxorious husband, but not of property, seeing it was for that I married you. Whereupon ensued uproar and personal dispute; noise of shrill woman-rage and roar of gruff man's-passion; pot-house blackguardings, and polite abuse; all of

which, their fire-tempered son had to witness and be neuter: which he contrived to be, for the time being. It is not deemed customary, or even proper, for a child to castigate his parents; yet had our Mirabeau seen good to whip these same brawling parents of his, the crime had not certainly been unpardonable. They separated in disgust, and the marchioness commenced a formal demand by law shortly afterwards.

At the close of January, the marquis returned to Paris, and after several weeks' cogitation and reflection, gave Mirabeau permission to follow him. This was what he had long ardently desired; accordingly, he lost no time in availing himself of this permission. On the 11th he left Limoges, and, performing a journey of two hundred miles in three days, arrived at Paris on the 14th.

He was then in full favour with his father, and had a most kind reception; as he himself acknowledges to his sister Madame du Saillant. He was introduced to his Corsican commander and friend Vioménil, to his quondam enemy de Lambert, to the Marshal Broglie, the Duke of Orleans, and the Prince of Condé: with all these, and the whole Versailles court, he was a prodigious favourite. The marquis was evidently proud of him, for he wrote rapturous letters to the bailli, descriptive of

his son's triumph. Mirabeau was on familiar terms with the highest at court: to the surprise of the formal and experienced. Once, when at Versailles, the Princess Elizabeth, afterwards so well and so unfortunately known, then six years old, amused the whole court, when inoculation was the subject of conversation, by looking up at Mirabeau's rugged and seamed countenance, and inquiring whether *he* had been inoculated.

From March to June, the family were all assembled at Bignon; and as, consequently, no letters were written, there is no history of Mirabeau's occupation during that period. Early in June, however, he returned to Paris, but was not much at court; his time being devoted to study and the consultation of public libraries. He was intimate with M. de Pompignan, who commented "lamentably on the Lamentations," and he lived the life of a mercurial book-worm.

But this sunshine of parental favour was too bright to last long. Dame de Pailly discovered that he was becoming too much of a favourite, and too expensive also, to suit her views; she, therefore, when a piece of dangerous and intricate business presented itself in Limousin, prevailed upon the marquis to send Mirabeau to transact it. On the 14th of June, Mirabeau departed for Aigueperse, and remained there till November;

when he returned to Bignon, having performed all that was wanted, and far more than was expected. He found, however, that his father had been tampered with during his absence; for though he had achieved more than was hoped for, and had been guilty of no new indiscretion, frigid thanks were all he received: and a few quarrels ensued.

From this life he was released by a commotion at Mirabeau, between several communities and the agents of the marquis, which had even gone to the length of manual argument, and which he was despatched to settle as best he could. On the 2nd of December, he set out for Provence; and as usual, his perspicacity and eloquence, for he had a little oratory to perform, had due effect; and peace was restored as 1771 went out, and 1772, an eventful year for him, came in: veiling, as new years' advents ever do, "good-hap and sorrow."

Mirabeau was now well nigh twenty-three, and, although the rod was held over him till thirty-three, we may say, since he had grown *a man* and was no more a child, that the iron education was now completed. One thing, too, became apparent to all, except Mirabeau; that the race of the Mirabeaux must be perpetuated, and that monsieur le compte must marry: his ugly, eloquent face, his captivating word-music, and his "terrible gift of familiarity" must win himself a wife. "There

is," the marquis wrote, "little Marignane, who, should she even have a brother, will always have 600,000 francs," and could we only do away a little bar sinister, "little neighbour Peyrolle" might do, having cash; for cash in the marquis's eyes was the grand specific in wife-choosing: as, indeed, it is deemed so in every other case by other men than the Friend of Man. The Lord Jesus said, "Therefore shall a man leave father and mother, and sister and brother, and cling unto *his wife!*"; the spirit of modern times says, on the contrary, "Therefore shall a man leave father and mother, and sister and brother, and God and his own salvation, and cling *unto his cash!*". In which hell-doctrine the writer of this book can find no beauty, no good; and against which he will wage incessant war, as against sin and death, while God gives him strength to do battle. If a person should ask us, what, above all other causes, brought on the French revolution, we would answer: The overthrowing of the worship of the living God, and the idolatrous adoration of a golden idol; the sacrificing love, youth, and the natural impulses of the heart to the narrow plotting of old and sin-polluted life-gamesters! Be that as it may, this fact is certain, that Mirabeau has received his orders to marry some eligible lady forthwith (his father will, perhaps, communicate

the grand son-producing secret, if his confidence therein be not shaken by Du Saillant's failure); and though he sees none, and has no wish to unite himself to one he loves not, is forced to obey the parental mandate, and so must e'en use those wide, glaring eyes of his, and look around and choose: the speedier the better!

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

THE HUSBAND AND THE LOVER.

"What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, the temptations, true, often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? '*It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*'"

HERO WORSHIP, *Lecture II.*

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

MARRIAGE — EMBARRASSMENT — QUARREL — IMPRISONMENT.

1772—1774.

[1772.] MARIE-EMILIE DE COVET (the "little Marignane" of the marquis) was the only daughter of the Marquis of Marignane, the richest Provençal nobleman, who resided at his château in the vicinity of Aix. She was eighteen years of age, diminutive in stature, of a brown complexion, and was, says M. Montigny, vulgar looking *at first sight:* which may mean that she seemed vulgar until her lineage was discovered; when, of course, vulgarity would be impossible to a refined beholder!

This lady having been recommended to Mira-

beau by his father, with hints almost verging to commandful threats, he determined to take measures for obtaining her hand. Backed by a handsome settlement from the marquis, he forwarded a cold, formal proposal; but as he possessed no personal attractions, and had not troubled himself to manifest his invincible mental endowments, this offer was declined, and Mirabeau, perhaps thankfully, retired and raised the siege.

A torrent of abuse and scornful sarcastic reproaches from the marquis, and the advances a much less noble suitor was making in the lady's favour, roused at length the pride of Mirabeau; and awakening himself from his apathetic indifference, he determined to scorn all disadvantages and try once again. Against all manner of opposition he pushed resolutely forward, and in a very few weeks had gained the love of the "little Marignane," to the utter discomfiture of his rival. He was just on the verge of renewing his former offer, when the marquis, with his usual caprice, withdrew the settlements he had before made, and his son was therefore reduced to the necessity of retiring a second time. But his great power of captivation had made some tangible impression on the lady, and she expressed her willingness to share even poverty with *him*. Accordingly, he did not retire, but on the 22nd of June was united

to the heiress of Marignane; her father settling out of his great superfluity only a paltry allowance of 125*l.* per annum, while his father granted a similar one of 250*l.* With such a prospect of monetary affluence did the representatives of the two oldest and wealthiest Provençal houses enter into holy matrimony.

After the wedding, which was costly in the extreme, the newly-married couple opened house in an elegant hôtel at Aix; and, as might have been expected, were very soon immersed in pecuniary difficulties.

A too reckless expenditure and profuse lavishness was, to the period of his death, Mirabeau's chief fault; and if his error was on that side, that of his father was even more reprehensible on the other; for Mirabeau never, at any period of his life, had the allowance of a tradesman's son. During his residence in Provence, while his marriage was negociating, he had contracted a few debts; which, shortly before that ceremony took place, he acknowledged to his father, requesting him to make him an unembarrassed man, on his start in domesticity. This the marquis refused to do; and, though he expressed his wish that the lustre of the Mirabeaux should not be lost sight of at the wedding, never offered the necessary

funds for the liquidation of expenses incident to that ceremony.

The most exiguous customs of society had been complied with by Mirabeau at this wedding; pageant and pomp had been procured, splendid wedding garments and other presents given to the bridesmaids, and the hôtel at Aix had been fitted up most sumptuously for the reception of the wedded pair. Thus when he settled down with his 350*l.* a year to enjoy the comforts of wedded life, he had contracted a formidable array of debts, amounting to about 3,000*l*: the payment of which was not likely to be speedy.

After waiting a month or two, in expectation of his father discharging his wedding costs and other engagements, and finding that he was becoming daily more and more involved, Mirabeau laid his circumstances before the Marquis of Marignane. That gentleman immediately offered a loan of 2500*l.*, provided the Marquis of Mirabeau approved of his son accepting it: but, unfortunately, the Friend of Man would neither assist his son nor permit another to do so; and Mirabeau's letter, praying for his sanction of the loan, was responded to on his part by furious invectives and menaces.

The last hope being thus destroyed, Mirabeau at once broke up his splendid establishment at

Aix, and retired with his countess to the Castle of Mirabeau. There, however, were no apartments fitted for a lady, and so, with extreme thoughtlessness, Mirabeau commenced restoring and adorning, for the use of his wife, the apartment which Anne of Pontèves (the lady who struck the woman in the church) had occupied of old. The cost of this beautifying, as is customary, greatly exceeded the estimates, and added, of course, to Mirabeau's difficulties. Every circumstance seemed to conspire to the augmentation of these difficulties. In surveying the Mirabeau estate, it became very apparent to him that it was capable, with draining, planting, repairing, and a few other alterations, of doubling its revenue directly. He accordingly urged it upon the marquis to make the required advances: but with no avail; and so, in the end, growing sick of beholding a fine estate so sacrificed, Mirabeau put his plans in practice at his own expense: or rather at that of his creditors.

This gave the finishing stroke to his economical distresses; for the cry of debts and duns having become so loud that it reached Bignon and Paris, the marquis obtained another *lettre-de-cachet* [1773], and by its influence compelled his son to withdraw from his ancestral residence, and retire to Manosque, an insignificant town in its vicinity.

Here, amid sickness, poverty, and an accumulation of misfortunes, the unfortunate couple resided for a year or more. Here, on the 8th of October, was a son, whom they named Victor, born unto him; and here, by way of driving away brooding melancholy, he composed his second work, entitled, "*An Essay on Despotism.*" Of this book Mirabeau himself gives the best criticism, and the truest account, writing of it in after years. "It is," he says, "a poor pamphlet, wherein are a few truths, some pictures, perhaps warmly coloured, which reveal a high and noble soul, and some fire in the head: but, once for all, the book is detestable, for details do not constitute a book. It is a tissue of shreds, united without order, filled with all the errors incident to the age at which I wrote: it has neither plan, nor style, nor revision, nor method." To this just view of the work, we may add, that it is valuable as a refutation of what has been stated; namely, that Mirabeau only became a despot-hater when he scented, or thought he scented, something to be gained by the advocacy of such sentiments.

[1774.] The marquis was not, however, contented with retirement at Manosque: he applied to the Court of the Châtelet at Paris for an interdict against his son. This interdict was a judicial censure, and suspension from action; reducing, in fact,

the interdicted to the position of a minor. In pursuance of this application, Mirabeau underwent an examination before the lieutenant-general of the seneschalship of Forcalquier, residing at Manosque; the result of which was, Mirabeau receiving permission to vindicate himself by a remonstrative address to the Paris Court of Châtelet. This remonstrance is of itself a monument of the forcible and dignified eloquence so natural to Mirabeau. It opens with a firm protest against a tribunal sitting in judgment on debts contracted four hundred and fifty miles from the place of sitting; at the same time affirming that he does not protest from opposition to his father, but rather to manifest his reverence for that father by, in obedience to his views, entering into explanation with a court whose authority he did not acknowledge. He then proceeds to give a manly and succinct history of his debts, showing how one led on to another until ruin stared him in the face; and the whole is concluded with a lengthy and most touching appeal to his father, praying him to grant his parental love, to be lenient to his errors, and offering him his sincerest respect and filial reverence.

It was, however, all in vain; and the interdict was passed upon him: added to which, the marquis procured a letter of exile, whereby his son was

confined within the town of Manosque; not being allowed to pass the boundary thereof, save under peril of severe punishment. A noble action, honourable to Mirabeau, caused him to transgress this restriction, and brought on his imprisonment in the Château d'If: caused, we may further say, the French Revolution; for the Castle of If led to the Castle of Joux, and near Joux dwelt a certain Sophie, with whom Mirabeau must e'en fly away; by which act he became a man hated of the world, avoided; by which hatred, high thoughts, the fruits of the solitary reserve an ill-name gives, arose in his soul, which found in due course a time and place for utterance, outblazoning the ill-fame, astonishing the world. Thus, like a curb-chain, intertwined in indivisible concatenations, are the human destinies!

The Chevalier de Gassaud, a cousin of the Countess of Mirabeau, had become enamoured of his little brown relative; and, as she had married Mirabeau partly for the license marriage in France confers, and as a release from parental tyranny, an amiable dalliance, epistolary and personal, was established between them, to their mutual satisfaction. Not so to the husband; who, being by nature proudly jealous and strong-passioned, no sooner discovered the liaison than he challenged M. de Gassaud: and a duel would have

been the result, had not the father and friends of the foolish young Lothario, knowing well Mirabeau's capacity for fighting, with tears and supplications persuaded Mirabeau to accept a cringing apology, and dismiss the wife-corrupter, unwounded, with contempt. Unfortunately the matter did not rest there. Young de Gassaud was engaged to the daughter of the Marquis of Tourette; but, when the tidings of the very questionable behaviour of the *fiancé* reached the Tourette family, a rupture instantly ensued between the betrothed. This Mirabeau considered as too severe a punishment for the young man, whose liaison had not gone beyond verbal love-making; and as, moreover, an aspersion upon the fair fame of his countess. He therefore set all Letters of Exile at defiance, and departed secretly from Manosque to Tourette, some sixty miles distant. A few hours saw him at the château pleading with the offended family; a few minutes more saw him returning again homewards; having by the magic of his irresistible eloquence achieved his object, and placed de Gassaud in his primitive situation. But, coming home, another horseman was descried by him in the distance; as they drew nearer, his features become plainer, and Mirabeau discovered that it was the Baron of Villeneuve-Moans, a person with whom he had long wished for an inter-

view. This Villeneuve-Moans, having a quarrel with the Marquis of Cabris (who, as we stated, married Mirabeau's younger sister) could not find a manlier revenge than publicly insulting the marchioness before a whole fashionable promenading assemblage. But though Villeneuve-Moans might insult women, he should have been aware of exasperated brothers, with Mirabeau blood in their veins. With rage fast mounting to overboiling passion, Mirabeau stopped this courageous baron, and demanded instantaneous satisfaction. The baron refused this demand haughtily: with insolence, with insult; and so, there being nothing left but that, Mirabeau, with a face white-hot, and set teeth, clutched "the bold baron" by the collar, and horse-whipped him till he considered himself avenged.

As ill luck would have it, this spectacle was not quite private: several peasants witnessed the castigation, and the affair was soon the talk of the province; suggesting many questions, foremost of which is this—How came the Count Mirabeau, who was confined within Manosque, to be flogging Villeneuve-Moans some twenty miles away from there? The answer to which question is, that on the 26th of June, as Mirabeau sat in his house—a house of tears, alas! for his son was dying, as they thought—tending his sick child; behold! myrmidons of

the law entered, who, deaf to even *his* eloquence, amid the sobs of the heart-broken countess, and sick moans of the afflicted boy, dragged Mirabeau away from it—from Manosque afterwards—and so by slow removes from place to place, until in the end, on the 23d of August, they finally deposited him in the safe keeping of the Castle of If: to muse upon his strange destiny, and reflect upon his future prospects, if he chose to do so.

CHAPTER II

CASTLES OF IF AND JOUX.

1774—1775.

[1774.] The Castle of If stands on a barren rock, the whole surface whereof the fortress covers, arising from the waters of the Mediterranean, within sight of Marseilles. Deep beams the blue of the unclouded sunbright skies upon the castle, and the hot day-god gilds the grey bastions and flanked towers, smiling as a ray from heaven upon the earth-abandoned captive. From his lonely cell in the narrow turrets, the prisoner can look forth upon the expanse of waters, and behold the ways of the Almighty when he walks with his grand omnipotence upon the billows, now smoothing them to a gently undulating ripple, now tossing them heaven high amid thunders and lightnings and the whole terrorial armament of the skies; can see the vessels with their white-brown

sails, skim the surface proudly, like Cleopatran Cydnus-barges, sailing in and sailing out, while innumerable birds and fishes play around them gleefully. All these can the poor captive behold from his prison in the lonely sea-girt castle, noting the freedom Heaven so kindly grants, but which man so madly mars.

Mirabeau was placed in this castle by royal order, professedly for violation of his exile, and also for his attack upon M. Moans; who had the mean cowardice to publish his castigation by procuring a judicial sentence against him. But behind this royal agency was the marquis, as usual, swaying the destinies of his unfortunate son: swaying more rigorously than ever, for the commandant, M. Dallégre, was instructed to treat his new prisoner with the utmost severity; to withhold from him all communication whatever, whether verbal or personal, not even excepting the bailli of Mirabeau or the marquis himself. As Mirabeau's character had been represented to M. Dallégre as one mass of atrocity and crime, these instructions were, for the first few weeks, strictly adhered to.

Besides these persecutions, Mirabeau's sensitive heart received another blow, from the selfish conduct of his wife, whom he had despatched to Bignon on his confinement in August, to use her influence with the marquis on his behalf. Finding

all her efforts in vain, she returned in September to her father's mansion near Aix, and positively refused to share her husband's apartments at the Castle of If. She had united her life-lot with his, for richer, for poorer; for better, for worse; and, as far as the "better" and "richer" were concerned, had no objection to fulfil her marriage vow; but, as regarded the other portion, she respectfully declined acting up to it, seeing that there was brilliant society at Aix, and she, being married, was no longer debarred from its full enjoyment.

Thus deserted by every living being, by his nearest and dearest relatives; imprisoned under a rigorous governor, upon a solitary rock-prison, for no crimes but simply for a little half-pardonable extravagance, how did Mirabeau demean himself? Like a brave and a great man: he did not weep and moan in feverish Byronic sorrow, but he bowed himself calmly and with dignified humility before the Inevitable; and banished reflection upon his unhappy situation and beclouded prospects by writing a spirited and highly interesting Life of Jean-Antoine de Mirabeau, of the *col d'argent*, his grandfather, to which he prefixed a graphic sketch of the family history from their expulsion from Florence: from which work our genealogical history of the family has been taken.

But, with a man like Mirabeau for a prisoner, it was impossible for M. Dallégre to continue his strictness and acerbity: the open-hearted frankness and brotherly freedom of the captive won upon him, and after two months' residence, he permitted him to correspond at will, and have interviews with all whom he desired to see. Beyond this, he took a lively interest in his affairs, and interested himself to procure his release.

In November, while he resided at If, Boniface de Mirabeau, his brother, crosses our history. This young man had resided since early youth in Malta, of which place he was a knight, and went by the name of the Chevalier. Having heard of his brother's unjust imprisonment, despite an attack of sickness under which he was suffering, he set out from Malta, and reached Marseilles in due course. Let him tell his own story.

"It blew hard, and not one of the boatmen would leave the port; I induced two of them, more by menaces than by money, for you know I have not much of that, while I have any quantity of the former, God be thanked. I arrive at the Castle of If; gates shut, and the lieutenant, in the absence of Dallégre, informs me quite sweetly that I had better depart as I came. 'Not, if you please, without seeing Gabriel.'—'You cannot see him.'—'I will write to him.'—'Not that

either.'—'I will wait for M. Dallégre then.'—'Be it so: for twenty-four hours, not more.' Upon this I take my measures: I go to La Mouret (a canteen-keeper's wife), and we agree together that in the evening, after roll-call, I shall see this poor devil. I reach him, not like a paladin, but like a thief or a gallant, which you will, and we open out together. They were afraid that he would have heated my head to the height of his own: they do him little justice, for I can assure you, that while he was relating his story, and when the indignation his narrative excited burst forth in these words, 'But, although yet weakly, I have two arms, and good enough to break those of M. de Villeneuve-Moans, or his brothers at least,' he answered, 'My friend, you will ruin us both;' and I acknowledge to you, that perhaps that consideration alone prevented me executing a project badly enough conceived, and which the fermentation of a head of my age could alone excuse."*

And so, being attempered by his elder brother, young Chevalier de Mirabeau returns once more to Malta, and never again crosses our story; until we find him in a state of quarrel with Mirabeau, seated on the opposite side of the National Assembly, blown out into a fat-paunched viscount, and surnamed "Barrel."

* Fils Adop. ii. 42.

This young man's sympathy was speedily followed by that of one far dearer to Mirabeau; that of his sister, Madame de Saillant: the sister who alone of all her family had never been abused and tyrannized over by her father, and yet who, despite this predeliction of her father's, sided not with him, but rather with Mirabeau; loving him till his death, loving his memory long years after his death (for she was alive in 1836), and never varying in her constant love. This lady, early in January [1775], addressed a letter to her brother, full of condolence, of hope for happier days, of sincere affection; and the proud, brave heart of Mirabeau, which would melt before no adversity or persecution, softened into tears before this kind tribute of a sister's affection.

"You make me break my oath, my dear sister," he wrote in reply. "My father has written to M. Dallégre, that the order of the king did not except either my father, or my uncle, or any person, from the prohibition that I had from correspondence. I did not expect that new severity, and in the bitterness of my heart I had sworn not to write to any of my relatives, since my father repulsed me with a kind of horror; but I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of answering you two words: to thank you, weeping, and to tell you

that they shall make me die of grief ere they shall harden my heart."*

Such notes, even amid persecution and distress, could come from the stormful heart of Mirabeau: he had tears in him; and he that has true tears in his composition, like he that has laughter, cannot be wholly bad; but, on the contrary, however obscured his external appearance, the basis of him must be good. He was as some sweet-toned rock harmonicon, which, when forcibly struck without discretion, yields only noisy and uproarious discord, but when touched mildly, with tenderness, breathes forth seraphic melodies. But the boldness with which Mirabeau bore up against his sea of troubles, and his "terrible gift of familiarity" (*terrible don de la familiarité*, as the marquis called it), had made the commandant entirely his own. Shortly after his arrival, as we mentioned, he permitted his prisoner to correspond freely; and now in May, after Mirabeau having been at If nine months, compassion and a sense of injustice caused him to write several letters to the marquis, urging him to release his injured son at once. "Since," wrote he, "Monsieur the Count of Mirabeau has been detained at the Castle of If, he has never given to any one the least cause

* Fils Adop. ii. 41.

of complaint, but has always conducted himself perfectly well; he has sustained with the utmost possible moderation all the altercations I have several times excited to try his temper, and he will carry away with him the esteem, the friendship, and respect of all the place."*

The natural answer to such an appeal would have been the instant release of his son; but the marquis, moved by his own prescribed rules, determined quite otherwise: determined that, since he had won over the commandant of If, and borne up against the prison on its solitary rock, he should try another severer governor, and another more unpleasant prison. As was the spirit to the man in the story, whom he had raised and whom he must keep employed, and could not dismiss, so was Mirabeau to his father; who set him all manner of tasks, ever the same, yet ever-changing: governors, cold-hearted and lynx-eyed, to subdue and win their friendship, and so soon as one was conquered another was substituted; until at length, as we shall find, growing weary, he dismissed the spirit to wander at its will.

Scarcely, therefore, had the marquis received M. Dallégre's testimonial of his son's good conduct, when he decided, as a reward for the said conduct, to remove him to the Castle of Joux, and reduce

* Fils Adop. ii. 45.

his allowance from two hundred and fifty to fifty pounds per annum. Early in May, Mirabeau bade farewell to the rock of If, and under the care of M. Duveyrier, a kind of prisoner's conductor, proceeded to Joux.

Such a wretched prison was the Castle of Joux, that M. Duveyrier was cautioned not to name to his charge their place of destination, lest he should endeavour to escape. But as Duveyrier was anxious as to the safe keeping of his prisoner, and as he had no escort, he requested Mirabeau, before they started, to give his word that he would not escape; but as Mirabeau would not agree to this until he knew his destined prison, Duveyrier informed him whither they were bound. Determined to the very last persecution to submit himself mildly to his father's will, so that he might be blameless, although the Castle of Joux was noted for its horrible situation and nature, and although he had pistols and Duveyrier was unarmed, and the road solitary, he did not attempt to escape, but on the 25th of June entered into the Castle of Joux.

This new prison, in point of comfort and situation, was far worse than the Castle of If. Situated within a few miles of Switzerland, in the jaws of the Jura mountains, the Castle of Joux stands upon a tall cliff-pinnacle hanging over the valley, so high up that few visitors, save compulsory ones,

ever reach it; while on its walls and the mountains round about lies perpetual snow, and even in the finest summer weather, the whole fortress is invisible from the valley, owing to the clouds which abound at such an altitude.* Of the internal arrangements, it is sufficient to say that they vied with the external eligibility of situation.

For a little time after his arrival at Joux, Mirabeau gave way to great depression of spirits, and shutting himself up in his cell, refused all intercourse with the outer world. His governor, M. de St. Mauris, was the worst he had hitherto encountered: nevertheless, a fortuitous event tended to alleviate his unpleasant situation. On the 11th of June, Louis XVI. was crowned; and Pontarlier, situated about a mile from the castle, among other towns, had great festivities, in which the Count of St. Mauris played first fiddle. Being a vain old man, he was anxious that this era in his life, perhaps his culmination, should be duly chronicled; and accordingly, by granting a kind of half liberty, he prevailed upon Mirabeau to witness these festivities, and draw up an account thereof: which he did in a very leaden and dull manner, and which was printed at Geneva.

Being now at liberty to make daily visits to

* Voyages Pittoresques, &c., dans l'ancienne France. Franche-Compté, p. 168.

Pontarlier, it was natural that he should seek to enter into the enjoyment of what society there was at that place: which society consisted of but one family of equal standing with himself. To this family he was introduced by his governor, St. Mauris, who was related to its head. This was that of the Marquis of Monnier, an old dotard of seventy-five, of unlimited means, and very limited intellect. The society of such a one could have few charms for Mirabeau; but then there was his wife, young, lovely, fascinating: *she* alone was the society of Pontarlier to Mirabeau; and so—

> "Prepare a sigh, prepare a tear,
> For I've a tender tale to tell."

CHAPTER III.

SOPHIE!

1775.

All the biographers of Mirabeau have hitherto introduced the episode we are about to enter on with backwardness, with hesitation, and with apologies; wishing, were it possible, to omit the affair entirely. With very different sentiments do we commence upon this theme: we do not hesitate at all, since we are writing the life of a man, and not that of a mechanical sinless image; and the man himself has gone to his rest, where the praise or blame of this very interfering world falls alike idly on his ashes, unrecked of and unheeded. Rather with thanks than otherwise do we narrate; since it demonstrates the fact, that, even amid the artificialities and hollow perfumed mummeries of eighteenth century life, there was a man who, even in his very sins and errors, was no mannikin, but a man and a colossus! To the tale, then.

The Marquis of Monnier, lord of Courvière, Mamerole, and other places, was, as we stated, a foolish old dotard of seventy-five at the time when Mirabeau became acquainted with him. He had held a high government situation at Dôle; from which he had retired, laden with money, with an only daughter, to his mansion at Pontarlier, about ten years previously. But this daughter, having married M. de Valdahon against his will, and the husband having besides gained a large dowry from him, he resolved, as a revenge, to marry; and so, on the 1st of July, 1771, being then seventy-one, he led, like Winter espousing Spring, Mademoiselle Sophie de Ruffey to the hymeneal altar, she being then eighteen: the marriage was celebrated at Tronchant, in Burgundy. Such a union might be pleasant to the old bridegroom, but to the young bride how terrible: to reflection what a mockery, to humanity what a disgrace, to God what a fearful crime! It was doubly pitiable, considering that on her side it was compulsory, and that her maiden life had not been happy. Monsieur and Madame de Ruffey were gloomy bigots, such as for the most part have died out with feudalism and ignorance; and their home was the abode of stern and melancholy asceticism. Their eldest daughter had been forced by them to enter a convent, and the second, Sophie,

had, when but seventeen, been allowed her choice between the naturalist Buffon, and a convent also. Some accident, however, broke off the connection with Buffon; and the marquis being then in the market, armed with money-bags and estates, bade a handsome settlement for her, and so she was sold to him: resisting tearfully, but in vain. Were a Constantinople slave-market to be opened in a Christian country, public decency would, no doubt, be outraged, and cry out lustily; but, behold! a blacker iniquity, an unholier traffic in young hearts, occurs day by day, and public decency takes no notice whatsoever: nay, perhaps, calls it a "good match," instead of an accursed match of Lucifer. Such an empire has Humbug on this nether world!

Monsieur and Madame de Ruffey mated their beautiful, young, blooming rose-bud to this grey, old, sapless man; and, when in swift-flying chaise they drove away to the Marquis de Monnier's residence, doubtless imagined they had done a wise and clever deed in having wedded their flower to this money-bag: and yet, what had they done? O, Heaven! had they but known it, and stopped in time. They had blasphemed, in the fearfullest manner, the Maker of heaven and earth. From the beginning of the world was it ordained, that every *man*, at a certain passion-age,

should meet in his travellings some other beautiful fellow-soul, and uniting himself with her, call God to bless that union by solemn ceremony; which ceremony in modern times is named Marriage. So had God ordained: but M. de Ruffey, president of the Chamber of Accounts at Dijon, being wiser than He, acted differently, and taking his lovely child in his hand, he said—in fact, if not in word—Thou, O God, hast decreed that young woman-beauty should wed young manly strength, and so reproduce themselves, that our race die not. Behold *I* (M. de Ruffey) think not so; and do, therefore, give my budding girl to a dried-up decayed plant, knowing that no increase, no effect *can* come; and so dexterously defeat Thy purpose, in sending my daughter upon this world! Whenever a grey old man stands before the altar to espouse a young maiden, let the parent giving her away use some such words as these: so shall the ceremony be less like nonsense; so shall fewer victims be offered up before the shrine of hoary, wealthy lust, and God's shrine seldomer turned into a despicable Plutus-temple.

They wedded the fair spring flower to chill lifeless winter, and she could not flourish: was it wonderful that when the warm sun shone upon her with genial brilliance, she should woo the rays, bask in them, and so bloom floreal, and germinate?

In her severe and gloomy maiden days, and in the no less gloomy period of her unconsummated married life, there had dawned into the ardent and impetuous soul of this most lovely, most unhappy woman, the noble theorem, that before the world was formed, unto every soul had been given *one* other soul, of similar temperament, age, and intellect, whom one time at least it must meet; intercourse with whom alone is marriage—intercourse with any other than whom, though never so many marriage-rites had been priest-performed, is nothing else than foul adultery! Such true love-evangel had been the sublime theorem of this lady's girlish fancy; and upon this she had raised an ideal of that other soul, whom as yet she had never seen.

Nursing such like ethereal day-dreams lived the fair young Sophie: and behold!—now in the appointed season—this soul has been persecuted and hunted, until he is hunted into her presence; and so Fate's edicts are in a fair way for being fulfilled, despite man's selfish scheming.

Mirabeau was most kindly received by the Marquis of Monnier; upon whose heart and intellect his eloquence prevailed, as all conqueringly as over his numerous governors and commanders. What Mirabeau's conversation was, we cannot clearly define; but there must have lain therein some

inconceivable grandeur, insomuch as his bitterest enemies were not proof against it: when his father, his uncle, governors, friends, and, in after years, Sir Samuel Romilly and the Queen of France, were ravished by it, what wonder that a servile Marquis of Monnier loved to dwell upon his accents; what wonder that the romantic Sophie worshipped it as the language of Heaven, and adored its utterer as her realized ideal?

One can well imagine the first interview. When the tall, thick-set, athletic man, with his shabby garments (he was poor and in debt), and with his immense head and ugly features deep-pitted and scarred with smallpox defacings, entered, doubtless the marquis would look at him with suspicion through his spectacles, and the fair young Sophie withdraw from him, with anything rather than with love. But when the lips opened, and the mouth poured forth the riches of the brain, and in deep, low, musical bass notes, the tale of his persecutions, of his faults, of his strange life, of his strange wild ideas, and strange, high, heaven-scaling aspirations; why, then, with the old man suspicious peerings would open into an admiring gaze; then to the maiden a golden aureole would sport lambently around him, and the huge rough-seamed visage (like rude mountain scenery which, when the sun is overcast, frowns unlovely, but

when the light outfloods upon it, revealing the numerous lights and shades, seems fair and verdant), grow strangely beautiful, genius-illumined.

To the eloquent prisoner, to the unmarried married one, it was soon evident that LOVE was born between them: the lady, with the fierce impetuosity of woman's passion, pressed madly, blindly forward; the man, with a man's majesty, made one great effort to resist it. Finding that he loved Sophie, and that she loved him; seeing that with every interview the passion increased; and knowing to what a Niagara-fall they were necessarily drifting; Mirabeau, summoning up all his resolution, retired for two months away from the syren, and confining himself in his prison-house, endeavoured to expel the very recollection of Sophie, by commencing a flirtation with a village coquette in the neighbourhood. But finding this in vain, and the influence of Sophie fast tending to lure him to Pontarlier once again, as a last life-and-death recourse, he wrote in half-frenzied despair to his absent wife, a letter of eight pages, of such eloquence as the subject must have enkindled; telling her how he was on the brink of an awful precipice; how he wished to sin not, but how he felt that alone he could not long restrain himself; but that were she there, with their son, that would strengthen him so that he should not

fall; and urging her by her former love, by their mutual marriage-joys, by her solemn marriage-oath, by their child, by all ties and laws, God's and man's, to come and join him.

This letter, could it but be obtained, would, one can well imagine, be entitled to rank as a prose "Fare-thee-well! and if for ever," wrung from a heart like the poet's, only immeasurably nobler. But unfortunately, and it is a strong argument in favour of Mirabeau, acknowledging its receipt, she steadfastly refused to show it to any one. "Madame de Mirabeau," he wrote to his dear sister Madame du Saillant, "has not wished to show thee, neither will she show thee, the letter I wrote from Pontarlier, before my fall; before I was even entirely intoxicated by the philters of love. If I am called, at my last day, to appear before the Sublime Reason who governs nature, I will say to him, 'I am covered with enormous stains; but thou alone knowest, O great God, if I had been as guilty as I am, had she but answered as she should have done unto that letter.'"*

We shall see, hereafter, how Remorse and Penitence visited this lady quite too sternly. For long days, half-distracted, his inner struggle preying on his very life, did Mirabeau await her answer.

* Fils Adop. ii. 80.

At length it came: she was on the road to join him, to share his prison, to save his reputation? Not in the least: she was immersed in festivals and feasts; had no inclination to leave them, though it was her duty, and so sent "a few frozen lines, amiably insinuating that the man was mad."

Then was it that fierce indignation took possession of his heart; then was it that he flung all world-formulas and society-claims to the winds; then was it that he shut his eyes to all worldly consequences, and plunged forward to the crisis.

Ah, me! one might weep for this unfortunate Mirabeau: for this unfortunate Sophie! Taken young, radiant, just when she was budding into her ripe womanhood; taken from a dull, uncomfortable home, and married to a weak, imbecile, worn-out dotard, and borne by him to a penurious and still more uncomfortable home; the hot blood of woman burning passionate in her veins unsatisfied; her young heart filled with beautiful day-dreams of love, of joy; her hours passing in solitude and in sadness, what can a follower of *Christ* do but weep for her? *Must he throw a stone?* O, Charity, my brother! there is none that sins not: Charity!

Mirabeau also: he came from captivity in the Castle of If, to a harder and more solitary prison in the Castle of Joux, lonely amid the Alpine

avalanches; sad, deserted, abandoned by all; with the fiery passions of his fiery kindred so concentrated in himself, standing like a huge dammed-up passion-lake in his heart's recesses. Was it then wonderful, surprising, that these two young hot-blooded beings, so unfortunate, so unhappy, meeting as they did: she all so angel-lovely, he so noble-souled, so eloquent: was it wonderful that they found each too lovely for the other, and so rushed, blinded and empassioned, to madness, to rapture, and to crime?

Let him who heretofore, judging from the false and unjust accounts of Mirabeau in our History of Europe, has been accustomed to shriek shrill condemnations over him, let him peruse this question: *Has he ever endeavoured, deeply-searching, long-searching, never-tiring, to trace out the inner struggle of this man?* He has not: he has taken the elegant historian's word; he has taken rumour's word; he has stood upon the simple fact of *adultery*, and so has condemned him. That is not as it should be.

To him who looks deeply into this inner soul-struggle, the whole affair will seem simple; not surprising. When he reflects upon the history of the twain; the rigid ascetic education and forced marriage of the one; on the incessant punishments and iron education, and wife-abandonment of the

other; on the hot temperament of both, and their peculiar situation; he will not be surprised nor shudder, when the biographer chronicles that, on one of those evenings of December, the chaste moon, from her starry canopy beaming silently forth upon Pontarlier, looked down upon a deed of ecstatic and delirious sin!

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHASE — HOUNDS AT FAULT — GAME ESCAPED!

1776.

There appears to have been no such thing as jealousy in the composition of M. de Monnier, for he did not see what to all else was very manifest; or, if he did, winked at it. But M. de St. Mauris, the governor, was very different: he had, it would seem, though seventy himself, made advances to Sophie, which were repulsed with scorn; when, therefore, he discovered the success his prisoner had achieved in the same quarter, he determined to use all the power his situation afforded him, to annoy his luckier rival. An opportunity for recalling him to Joux soon presented itself.

A bale for Mirabeau from Neufchâtel was intercepted, and on being opened, was found to contain copies of the "Essay of Despotism," which

had been published at that town. At the same time a promissory-note of Mirabeau's came to light; the issuing whereof, he being under a lettre-de-cachet, was illegal. Making these his pretexts, St. Mauris wrote a very furious letter to the Marquis of Mirabeau, and shortly after, receiving instructions from him to secure Mirabeau in a cell "not unwholesome, but well barred and bolted," and to deny him all intercourse whatever, he issued an order to the prisoner to leave Pontarlier and return to the castle.

But Mirabeau had everything to dread from the malevolence of a man who neither lacked inclination nor power to render his life unbearable; and he had, moreover, heard, that, in pursuance of his father's request, the tower of Grammont, famed for its horrors and inconvenience, was being prepared for him. He therefore refused his obedience, and after flinging an indignant reproachful farewell at his tyrannical governor, stepped over, on the 16th of January, into Switzerland; and took up his abode at Verrières. After two days' residence there, finding life insupportable away from Sophie, he slipped back covertly and concealed himself at Pontarlier; holding stolen interviews with her when such were practicable.

During this concealed residence, he did not remain idle, but used all his energies to procure some amelioration of his state. He wrote a plain, manly letter to Count St. Germain, the war

minister, soliciting a commission, and referring fearlessly to Baron Vioménil, and his other comrades and commanders. To this he received no reply. He also plied his father incessantly with appeals, which were backed with much zeal, and at the same time prudence, by M. Michaud, king's procurator at Pontarlier, whom Mirabeau had won over to his cause. But the barriers between the marquis and his son were firmer now than ever; for the law-suit with the marchioness was at its height, and, as he expressed it to the bailli, "You see I am interested in prolonging the imprisonment of this scamp, lest he should fly to defend his mother:" and so he treated Mirabeau's letters with indifference, and Michaud's with polite vagueness; until those of the former growing too eloquent, and of the latter too bold and plain-spoken, he silenced them both by a threatening roar. Mirabeau then wrote to his mother, mentioning a scheme for suddenly appearing at court, and by the weight of his eloquence taking St. Germain by storm, and so winning his cause: from this characteristic idea the marchioness dissuaded him. Hesitation soon had to change to action. During this time St. Mauris had not been quiet an hour: by his agency Mirabeau was hunted from house to house; and, guiding M. Monnier's plans by the same means, Sophie was subjected to all manner of insults and persecutions, until, on the 25th of January, she flew to Dijon, and sought refuge with

her parents. She flew from bad to worse; for the stern, ascetic de Ruffeys, seeing no fault in the compulsory marriage and disparity of age, punished her with the severity of a convent: taking from her all means of correspondence, and confining her to her chamber, over which sentinels were always kept watching.

Scarcely had she departed for Dijon, ere her lover was on the same route; but no sooner had he set foot in that town than he was arrested, through Madame de Ruffey's denunciation of him to the grand provost. Here, as everywhere else, the genial manliness of Mirabeau stood his friend: an hour's conversation with M. Montherot, the grand provost, entirely conquered that gentleman's heart, insomuch that he risked situation and almost honour for his wonderful prisoner. He entered him in the prison under a fictitious name, that his whereabouts might not be known to his father and Pontarlier enemies; gave him liberty on parole; and, when a letter came from the ministry ordering him to be passed again to Joux, even ventured to send back the order unexecuted, with an appeal to the minister on his behalf.

On the 24th of March, Sophie left Dijon for Pontarlier, to rejoin M. Monnier; who, in his servile dotage, had promised to overlook everything, and treat her with the utmost kindness; and, as no unkindness could be worse than that of her parents, she had preferred returning to him.

Mirabeau, on her departure, entered the Castle of Dijon, and, with the aid of the kind provost, commenced energetic plans for procuring his liberty. With this intent he applied to the good Malesherbes, requesting to be allowed to take his place in his regiment. The minister's heart was ever open to the unfortunate, and to Mirabeau it was eminently so. He sent commissioners down to examine into his crimes, and the justice of his detention. The report of these was highly favourable, and Mirabeau's imprisonment would not have long continued, had not the marquis suddenly pushed forward with all his influence to procure his son's removal to another prison, and confinement during his pleasure: despite the commissioner's report, an order was issued on the 30th of April to transport him to the Castle of Dourlens; a prison even more revolting than that of Joux. Unable to resist these measures of the marquis, Malesherbes nevertheless maintained his regard for Mirabeau; and, as he was on the point of retiring—feeling it would be out of his power to assist him officially any more, and knowing that officers were ready to conduct him to a new prison—he suggested to him the advisability of flight beyond the frontiers, and service in a foreign army; until time, that great adjuster, should adjust these now-entangled affairs.

Seeing nothing left but this, Mirabeau retracted his parole, and, with the connivance of the gover-

nor, on the 25th of May left alike the castle and town of Dijon, and, having assumed the name of Count Beaumont (from an estate of the family), travelled to Verrières once again. As this place was but a mile and a half from the French boundary, he did not deem it safe to tarry there, and so pushed on to Geneva; nearly being wrecked as he traversed the lake.

In the mean time, on the 4th of June, the marquis had procured, from the minister Amelot, a warrant for his apprehension; and Inspector Muron and M. Brugnières, two of the expertest bloodhounds in France, were placed upon the scent: charged not to lose it until they had hunted down the game. And for two months a pretty chase they had of it: always within two days' march of the fugitive, often within two hours', yet never succeeding in laying hands upon him; so cunning a doubler was this hunted hare: with a lion's heart, though!

From Geneva he went by roundabout roads to Lyons, where he remained some days concealed with his sister, Madame de Cabris; who had also been imprudent, and even then lived in close intimacy with a low-born adventurer, named Brianson. This silly lady entered warmly into the romance then enacting; suffering Sophie to write to her as "dear sister" (as did the marchioness also as "dear *mother*"), and urging forcibly upon her brother to return and fly with his love to another

country; offering herself to accompany them with the rascal Brianson. This man and Madame de Cabris were, however, useful to Mirabeau in his flight, and helped not a little to baffle the blood-hounds; until Brianson turned traitor and placed them on the track, so that they almost caught their prey when he was about to eseape altogether from their clutches.

From Lyons Mirabeau slipped down to Avignon, and skulked about in Provence for a week or two; until, his ways becoming known, he had to abandon that part of the country; when proceeding to Nice, he struck off to Turin.

While Mirabeau was thus flying—if not for his life, for his liberty—from town to town, from province to province; the beautiful cause of all this troublous delirium-dance was undergoing a fearful persecution. Directly Mirabeau's escape from Dijon, and his flight to Pontarlier, had become known, Madame de Ruffey despatched her son to that place, to seize Sophie and convey her to a convent. But old Monnier, doting upon her, would not consent to this, and so she remained with him: but watched, and persecuted, and tormented, until she grew,

Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery;
Swift to be hurled,
Anywhere—anywhere,
Out of *that* world.

She would fly anywhere, do any thing, crime or not crime, rather than endure such life longer. As for the convent, she told M. Monnier that she loved Mirabeau: that she would ever love him; and that, if it came to a convent, poison or flight should be employed.

Daily, in loud passionate epistles, did these two parted lovers correspond; and daily did the epistles grow ever more and more passionate, till they mounted up to the fierce white-heat of frenzy: and then came the denouement. See how writes the love-sick lady:—

"Hear me! I can no longer endure this state of suffering: it is all too terrible to be parted from my *husband* and to know that he is wretched. Let us unite ourselves, or let me die! Next year I shall not see; for I neither can nor would endure till then: to live separate from thee, that is to die a thousand deaths daily. After what we have already done, we cannot recede; let us hasten, therefore, to render ourselves happy. Thyself is all I ask—all destinies will seem sweet to me, provided I but share thy fate, and do not quit thee ever! Shall I never, then, receive the signal of our flight? Thou told'st me that we should not be in poverty in our place of retreat; but that thou would'st teach languages, music, painting: without doubt, thou think'st so still. And I—what could I do? I would labour at our residence—in a shop—as a governess; yes, what-

soever might be necessary, so that we might only be together. My present situation terrifies me—no longer can I endure it—end it must soon. I repeat daily—MY LOVE OR DEATH!"*

So writes, in the hot ebullience of her woman's love, the fond Sophie. See how heat enkindles heat, and how Mirabeau acknowledges her prayer.

Bursting out from his lurking den at Turin—with his route betrayed to the bloodhounds by the rascal Brianson, and they flying across country to surprise him in his intended action,—regardless of labour and peril, he plunges into the heart of the Swiss Alps; crosses almost alone the great St. Bernard; dives into the mountainous Valais province; turns north-westerly to the lake of Geneva; and on the 23rd of August arrives at Verrières once again.

The same evening, under cover of the night, Sophie, habited as a man, by aid of a ladder, scaled the garden-wall of her prison residence; and, flying to the trysting-place on the wings of love, fell safely into the arms of her tried and devoted admirer. Let him who has loved—*loved* I say, not meaning had an attachment—let him who has *loved*, picture to himself that meeting in the lone country, under the void face of night, with no eye save the many-eyed heavens to mark their transport!

* Fils Adop. ii. 122.

"Madame de Monnier," wrote Mirabeau, "had only myself for a resource: she was compromised, and laid open to ruin by my fault. Should I have abandoned her when I could defend? After leading her to the very verge of the abyss, should I have precipitated her into it? I had then been a prodigy of cowardice, a monster of ingratitude: in that case I should have merited my fate—I should have been the vilest of men! The bare idea makes me shudder! She claimed my assistance and the performance of my oaths: I flew, I ran, I traversed the Alps; and she came then, and delivered up herself, undoubting, to my honour and my truth."*

Two days after, when Brugnières and his fellow bloodhound reached Pontarlier, they found that they had come a day too late, and that the prey had escaped their grasp: deluded, outwitted, and evaded them.

As for the united lovers, they resided three weeks in undisturbed retirement at Verrières: and though, by their late rash act, ruined and broken in the world's eye, think ye, they were not happy? "*Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart!*" Have a care, my brother! those are HIS words. If thou would'st know how to express thyself on this most questionable

* Fils Adop. ii. 143.

act, we say—in silence; but if silence be impossible to thee, why then weep!—weep for the whole race of man: how we are at best but weak, sinful creatures; and the strongest, and the purest, and the best, foolish, frail, and impure before the searching eye of God!

CHAPTER V.

HOLLAND—LOVE AND LITERATURE—ARREST, BUT NOT A REST.

1776—1777.

[1776.] THE fugitive lovers had never, of course, for one moment thought of settling at Verrières: its extreme propinquity to France, and the impracticability of obtaining a livelihood by the pen in that locality, rendered it ineligible, if not impossible, for their residence. The three weeks, therefore, of their sojourn there, were occupied almost entirely with arranging plans for their future course, and in borrowing a small stock of money necessary for their journey. The report that they had plundered M. Monnier was totally false; since they had barely enough to carry them safely away. Their measures being at length prepared, they left Verrières on the 17th of September, and on the 26th of the same month reached Rotterdam: at that city they tarried a few days, and then departed for Amsterdam; at which place they arrived on the 7th of October.

They selected neat and comfortable, but not expensive, apartments at the house of one Lequesne, a tailor, who resided in the Kalbestrand. Their slender means being then exhausted, Mirabeau, who had assumed the name of St. Mathieu (from an estate of his mother's in Limousin), began taking active measures for securing some literary employment: as, indeed, *in*activity was at all times a thing impossible for him.

The Dutch publishers at that period transacted all the business which is now done at Brussels; printing things which a French printer dare not, pirating copyrights, and underselling in all quarters of the globe. To one of these individuals, by name Mark Michel Rey, whom Rousseau had tried with indifferent success, Mirabeau applied for employment under his assumed name, in the following letter:—

"*Amsterdam, Oct. 2nd,* 1776.

"TO M. M. REY, BOOKSELLER.

"SIR,—Accumulated misfortunes, of which it is useless to give you a detail, have compelled me to leave my native country. Little imports it to you who I am, how my persecutors have been implacable, and all the other circumstances which, in a country less exposed to the tales of adventurers, ought to interest a feeling man; but I do not doubt that you will willingly seize the opportunity to aid a man of letters, when you find the pleasure

of doing good and the interests of commerce are united. I am the author of the Essay on Despotism; a work which, although printed since several times at Neufchâtel, where it went through two editions in six weeks, is only commencing to create a sensation in France: perhaps too great for my tranquillity. This essay was written very rapidly, without plan, without order, and rather as the confession of the faith of a citizen, than a literary attempt. It may, however, be sufficient to give you some idea of the manner and style of a man not yet seven-and-twenty. I have much facility in writing, and have the will as well as the necessity for working.

"See, sir, if you can employ me upon anything: we will speak of pecuniary arrangements when you have seen what I can do. The only thing that I shall request of you, if you make proposals for some undertaking, is to procure me such books as I shall stand in need of. I beg you to respond with the same frankness with which I have written: they will call for your letter to-night.

"P.S.—They are selling at this moment the 'Essay on Despotism' very dear in France. The typography is very defective; if you think you can make an advantageous speculation of another edition, I will improve and augment it considerably: but that will require time.

"If you have in view, at present, any valuable

edition, I think you will find few editors as exact and as diligent as myself." *

The response to this would appear to have been surly, since we find him, on the 24th, writing another stronger letter to the same individual; which had no more success, for it was not till after he had been in Amsterdam three months, that he obtained employment. Then, however, it flooded in upon him by wholesale. Michel Rey gave him much to do, and Changuyon, another bookseller, offered much more work than he could possibly perform; and so, by labouring incessantly from six in the morning to nine at night, he contrived to earn between them a louis per diem: exclusive of plunderings by Mr. Rey, who proved himself a hard and not over-honest task-master.

The work produced by Mirabeau in the short space which elapsed between his first employment in December (1776), to his arrest in May (1777), sufficiently demonstrates his unflagging industry. His first work was a pamphlet of twelve octavo pages, entitled, "Advice to the Hessians sold by their Prince to England." Frederick II., landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, had promised the British Government a subsidy of 6000 men to aid in subjugating the refractory Americans, then fighting for their rights; and this "Advice" consisted of a fiery denunciation of this banding together of the

* Fils Adop. ii. 158.

strong ones of the earth, to work not good but evil. It attained to the widest celebrity at the time, being circulated in no less that five languages. The first volume of a History of Travels followed this, and a pamphlet on Music. He also translated the first volume of a History of England, by Mrs. Macauley: the celebrated republican, to whom Dr. Johnson entertained such an antipathy; and a considerable portion of the Life of Philip II. (of Spain), by Watson. Added to all which, he, being a free-mason, entered warmly into the affairs of that singular secret-preserving society, and concocted a design for a kind of branch association, which was in the end to lop away a few excrescences which Mirabeau conceived to have grown upon free-masonry: this plan was embodied by him in a series of propositions found among his papers; but of which it is impossible to say whether they ever saw the light at all in Holland. He also contrived to obtain the friendship of all the neighbouring literati, as well as of many influential and respectable citizens.

[1777.] This period must have been the most really happy—perhaps the only happy one—in all Mirabeau's strange life; for occupation begets content: and though to rise at six and bend over a desk till nine be wearisome and hard, it is immeasurably superior, consider it how you will, to rising at twelve and retiring at three in the morning, conscious of having done no one real act of worth.

Of their life at this time he himself paints a sweet picture.

"Study occupied nearly all my time, and a man who was double my age might have been less sedentary—this thy love remembers. I had at times involuntary outbursts of vivacity and impatience, which thou mightst have taken for ill-humour; but one of thy kisses ever restored serenity to my countenance and peace to my spirit. . . . An hour of music delighted me; and my adorable companion, though nourished and bred in opulence, was never so gay, so courageous, so attentive, so affable, so tender, as in poverty: her unchangeable warm-heartedness displayed itself to its utmost extent. We did not appear like an insensate couple whom a passing madness had driven from their country; and, indeed, we were *not* such."*

And Sophie must not be silent either.

"Thou refused'st my caresses," she says, "for fear that they might make thee forget thy books; but with what rapture didst thou not return shortly—with what transport did I not hold thee in my arms! How often didst thou not tear thyself from these arms to fly to thy labour, to thy tedious occupations: but nothing was wearisome to thee if it brought comfort to thy Sophie. Ah, dearest! truly thou wert the model of true lovers!"

* Lettres Originales du Donjon de Vincennes, i. 406.

Truly this is very beautiful: a finer picture of united love it might be difficult to draw. If, as we believe, in plodding over the weary mountain of Life to that unknown much-loved Shadow-Land which lies on the further side of the Death-river, flowing through the valley beyond the Life-mountain—if, in travelling over that, there is a time in every man's life when he takes a glimpse of that fair far country, and has a foretaste of its joys, surely this was that time in the life of Mirabeau. Pomp — a world's admiration — splendour — triumph; these came: but, O! they did not, they could not, fall so sweetly on his heart as those nine months of love and poverty, when he dwelt in exile, a despised and ruined man.

O! das sie ewig grünen bliebe,
Die schöne Zeit des jungen Liebe.

But such moments as these could not last: nay, when we reflect upon it, however comfortable to Mirabeau, it was not advisable, for the world, that they should last. Had they done so, he might have lived some twenty years as a bookseller's drudge, or perhaps by his transcendant abilities raised himself to a wealthy bookseller and burgess; and then, when the marquis departed, have returned unto his own territories and titles, a gouty choleric man, with a large family of questionables. But, as we said, at his birth REVOLUTION was coming into the world, like a terrible

Bucephalus, whom no man could or dare mount, save this Alexander of a Mirabeau, who dare mount and *could* manage; and it was necessary, to the proper management of this wild world-charger, that the rider himself should understand, from stern practical persecution, *why* and how that Bucephalus was so untameable—so dreadful.

Owing to Mirabeau's confession of being author of the Essay on Despotism, well known as his in France, the secret of his retreat became divulged to all men. M. Monnier sent offers, begging of his wife to return, promising to forget and forgive everything; and even offered money to the fugitives. Sophie, sensible that she was an insuperable bar to her real husband's prosperity, though she refused to accede to this proposal of her husband by law, expressed, in a letter to the Marchioness of Mirabeau, her willingness to retire into a convent in Limousin, near the residence of the marchioness. Although urged by his mother to consent to this, Mirabeau was far too generous to submit to any such thing; and so M. Monnier, irritated at Sophie's refusal, commenced formal proceedings against his wife and Mirabeau, to regain his settlements and her dowry. The result of which proceedings was, that on the 10th of May, the tribunal of the Bailliwick of Pontarlier, formally decreed Mirabeau "guilty of abduction and seduction;" condemned him to be beheaded in effigy; to pay a fine of five livres to the king,

and forty thousand livres to the Marquis of Monnier; while Sophie, guilty chiefly of *being* abducted and seduced, was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment in the Besançon House of Correction; to be there shaved and punished like the females of the place, and to forfeit all her rights and privileges of every kind: her marriage portion going to M. Monnier. At which judicial froth, Mirabeau, secure in Amsterdam, could very well afford to laugh: the effigy decapitation would not harm him; and as for the forty thousand livres, seeing that he had neither money nor chattels, they had best distrain for that.

But, unfortunately, hotter enemies than the Bailliwick of Pontarlier were at work. The de Ruffeys were determined to recover their daughter; and the Marquis of Mirabeau, being more embittered than ever against his son, on account of his conduct and his alliance with the marchioness, readily joined measures with them. Inspector Brugnières, who had dogged his steps before, soon scented out the exact residence of their prey; and the marquis's influence prevailed upon the Count of Vergennes to issue orders for their arrest, *whether alive or dead:* with which Brugnières was despatched to Amsterdam; having, moreover, a letter to the Duke of Lavanguyon, the French ambassador, urging him to procure from the States a permission to arrest. This permission was easily obtained, but not without news of the ap-

plication getting abroad. The French Consul called on Mirabeau, and offered him money and a passport, would he but give up Sophie to her fate: but he would not hear of it. He did, however, take measures to escape; and, hearing that their arrest was fixed for the 15th of May, on the 14th they decided upon disappearing from Amsterdam. This flight was doubly difficult and dangerous, as Sophie was then pregnant. In the evening, however, fearful of being seen together, Mirabeau left the house, and a friend was to have conducted Sophie by another road to an appointed rendezvous. Scarcely had he turned out of the Kalbestrand, ere tidings reached him that she had been arrested at the very moment of leaving the house. In an agony of grief he flew back and found it too true—found Sophie about to apply poison to her lips, in the wild madness of her boundless anguish. Appealing to her love to him—to her duty to their unborn child, Mirabeau, by aid of his captor, Brugnières, contrived to extort from her a promise that she would do no such rash action: with the reservation, however, that, did she not hear from him in a certain time, DEATH should end all love and suffering for ever. And so these two unfortunate lovers parted, never to meet again for several years; and then in a state of quarrel, love being ended between them.

St. Pélagie, a house for common prostitutes, had been selected for Sophie by her kind friends:

but Brugnières, who, after having hunted them down, was excessively kind and good-natured, wrote to M. Lenoir, the head of the police at Paris, to change this infernal order. As his remonstrances were also backed by the ambassador, it was changed to a kind of genteel house of correction for erratic ladies, kept by Mademoiselle Douay, in the Rue de Charonne at Paris; in which establishment she was entered under the assumed name of Madame de Courvière.

As for Mirabeau, his destination was soon apparent; on the 7th of June he entered into Vincennes: not into the fortress, merely, but into what is termed the Donjon of Vincennes, in opposition to the castle; and commenced his longest, most rigorous, and fortunately *the last* of all his forced imprisonments.

CHAPTER VI.

VINCENNES.

1777—1780.

There is nothing much more melancholy in the history of man than the early portion of Mirabeau's imprisonment in Vincennes. Parted abruptly from the woman he had loved so fondly, just when she was about to give him a pledge of their love, to which his extremely sensitive mind looked forward eagerly; hardly knowing her fate —being debarred from all writing or speech; one hour a day only being allowed for ambulatory exercise in the corridor; the very turnkey enjoined to speak no more than was absolutely necessary; his food stinted and coarse; allowed to remain three weeks without changing raiment or seeing a barber; added to all which having during that period a fever and spitting blood: surely his situation was not delectable.

Madness, from despondency and uncertainty, had well nigh overthrown the minds of both the lovers: for Sophie in her residence was hardly

more comfortable. Her room was small, and had four inhabitants; she had to write in bed, with her curtains drawn, upon what paper she had contrived to smuggle in with her, with ink manufactured from nails put into vinegar. Mirabeau also had contrived to procure a few scraps, upon which he poured forth his burning tears, writing with tobacco water; but rashly expending this little stock, and having no book to employ his mind, no friend to reveal his overflowing sorrows unto, a delirium took possession of his soul, and he foamed and chafed like a strong mountain-eagle beating against his prison bars in the mad impotency of despair. Beside all this, what he had written to Sophie lay there unsent; correspondence being "banned and barred—forbidden fare!"

Had Mirabeau, so afflicted in body and in mind, put into execution a project of flying, God-abandoned, into suicide, as a relief from such an earthly hell as that—which did float like a boding spectre through his brain—one might have forgiven him; and deemed him a strong man, after all. But when he did not do it—when he fought through it, conquered it, and rose to what he did rise to, how strong a man must we not consider him.

A mitigation of the severest part of all this soon came: Mirabeau's extreme wretchedness won the lieutenant-general of police, M. Lenoir, to his cause; and permission was accorded for him to

correspond with whom he chose, under the discretionary perusal of M. Boucher, senior clerk of the Secret Department, to whose charge Mirabeau was given.

Then arose simultaneously from Sophie and Mirabeau, such a melancholy wailing melody of distraction and heart sickness as the world has rarely heard: letter after letter of regretful lamentation, faint-glimmering hope, and defiant indignation, teemed out in miraculous fecundity. These, stolen by Procurator Manuel from the desk of M. Boucher, after Mirabeau's death, (Boucher's only restriction in correspondence had been that the letters should be returned to him) and published in a garbled and mutilated form (with no distinction between the temperate epistles of a sane man, and the distorted ravings of a delirious sick man, as Mirabeau was during several periods of his confinement) under the title of *Original Letters from the Donjon of Vincennes*, have hitherto served as the ignis-fatuus guides of Mirabeau's biographer; misleading more than leading. This eloquent and mournful correspondence between Sophie and him, is there; and the admirer of the Abelard and Eloisa style of composition will therein find perfection. Nevertheless, the first passionate foaming being ended, Mirabeau soon found better employment than singing this invariable dirge-duet with Sophie, and turned himself with all his powers to the procuring of

his release. With this view, on the 17th of November, he addressed an appeal to the Duke of Noailles, a relation of his mother, and a man in authority; on the 20th of February, [1778] and on the 1st of May, he likewise appealed to M. Maurepas, then minister; and on the same day to the minister Amelot. He likewise drew up for his father's especial benefit, a series of extracts from the various works of the Friend of Man, exposing in strong terms letters-de-cachets, imprisonments without trial, &c. &c., and contrasting therewith the marquis's own conduct towards his son.

All these produced not the slightest effects: and so, as his father allowed him nothing, and his clothes were nearly worn out, leaving him half-naked, hé was necessitated to raise some money by literary labours. Not, however, by any means ceasing his epistolary labours: for the man moved heaven and earth to obtain his liberty; writing ceaselessly, by turns, the most eloquent, calm, fervid, fiery, bombastic, humble letters imaginable to his dearly loved sister Madame du Saillant; to his uncle the bailli, now looking doubtfully upon his strange nephew; to Sophie; to M. Boucher, his most tender and noble-hearted governor; to Dupont de Nemours, an old friend whose society had been granted him, and who had influence with the family; to his father; to his mother; the nimprisoned by her husband, the law-suit being still

at battle—in fact, to any man, woman, or child, on whom a written word could have effect, and which effect could ameliorate his hard lot.

To give a detailed account of Mirabeau's captivity at Vincennes, which were possible perhaps from his own letters therefrom, would be useless and uninteresting; for it was, of course, a monotonous and dull life. And that period, which to him was no doubt the most tedious in his existence, must be passed over here very briefly. We shall merely give a catalogue of the principal literary productions during that space, and then follow out his efforts to obtain a release to their final success.

In looking at the vast amount of actual writing performed by Mirabeau during his three years' residence in Vincennes, and regarding it in a simply mechanical point of view, it appears a great monument to his prodigious industry: the only thing to be lamented is, that this industry was not applied to a better object than his literary efforts in Vincennes for the most part were. But in condemning these, let it be borne in mind that there were few of them written from choice, but from the sternest compulsion; and that, therefore, he had to pander to the saleable, and so neglect the laudable; and if, in some portions, a savage defiance of all worldly conventionalities be apparent, let it be remembered that, considering the way in which, since his birth, he had been treated,

the world, take it altogether, could have small claims upon his love.

Of the majority of his works nothing is known: translations of Homer, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius, and Tasso; a tragedy, a drama, and a multifarious stock of sundries, have been entirely forgotten and lost—and those which did not share the same fate should have done. If, as we said, every man in life has a vision of heaven and a foretaste of its joys, so has he no less surely a foretaste of hell, and undergoes an eclipse; his intellectual radiance being obscured by the sombre shadow of the nether influences—and this Vincennes captivity was that period in Mirabeau's life. It was then that his body had the seeds of death sown in it by repeated diseases, and it was then that his mind suffered a complete agglomeration: bright scintillating flashes, however, darting ever and anon vividly through the gloom, as if to declare brilliantly that it was not *dead.*

The works of which authentic account remains, are:—1st, a translation of Tibullus, which the French critics have pronounced to be passable; 2nd, a selection from the Decameron of Boccacio; 3rd, a translation of the Kisses of Johannes Secundus, which is, we are informed, gracefully rendered; but the work itself, being not readable by women, should never have occupied the time of a man: for what a woman may not read, a man may not write, neither translate! 4th, an original

work on Lettres-de-Cachet and state prisons. This was by far his most important work hitherto; except, perhaps, the Essay on Despotism. The marquis called it "an outrageous and seditious folly;" but Mirabeau thought much more highly of it, and even went so far as to state that "it should not die" (*qui ne mourra point*): however, as lettres-de-cachet have vanished from off the face of the earth, and the state-bastile been overturned, this essay has followed in their track, and is now dead, and eaten by worms ere this. 5th. The Spy Discovered (*L'Espion Dévalisé*); a mad medley of Mirabeau's personal adventures for the most part, and which was first published in London some years after. 6th. *L'Erotica Biblion,* or Erratic Bible, and *La Conversion;* wretched and sickening abortions which all good men will forget: but which bad men, who love rather to dwell upon the insignificant sun-spots upon the luminaries of this world than their glorious effulgence, will not forget; but will, when it suits their depreciating purpose, thrust prominently forward, hurling the nobler attributes on one side to make room therefor. In addition to these he took part in some memoirs of the Duke of Aiguillon, a treatise on Inoculation, and a few others; of all which works the present writer, in taking a farewell of them, would heartily say, *Requiescant,* if not *in pace* then *in pulvere.*

A few months after their mutual imprisonment,

Sophie was delivered of a daughter, whom they named Sophie-Gabrielle. This occasioned a sweet hallelujah-chorus between the luckless parents: which, however, speedily changed into a shrill lament; for no sooner was the child weaned, than, regardless of a mother's feelings, and such a mother as Sophie, the de Ruffeys seized upon their nondescript grandchild, and took her from the sorrow-stricken parent: about the same time, also, Sophie was removed from the Rue de Charonne to the convent of Gien, near Montargis, and not very far from Bignon.

On the 8th of October, 1778, died Mirabeau's son, the heir of the house; and thus the total extinction of the race seemed imminent: for the younger Mirabeau, owing to his obesity, did not appear of a child-producing kind; and the elder was not likely to have any legitimate increase, at the rate he was going on. Some feeble attempts to procure Mirabeau's liberation followed this event; but they fell to nothing. His daughter, by Sophie, was not destined to live either, for on the 23rd of May 1780, she also died in her second year. Upon this sorrowful event the epistolary wail was renewed, and a thrilling threnody ascended alike from the cells of Gien and the dungeons of Vincennes.

Mirabeau's father seems to have been determined to complete his work this time, and not to listen to any entreaties or consent to Mirabeau's

release, till he had broken his spirits entirely and rendered him a docile machine. To show what kind of a father and general Friend of Man he was, it may be as well to state that, except Madame du Saillant and Boniface Mirabeau, all his family were at the same time under restraint. The marchioness, having lost her suit for the present, was confined at the convent of the Dames de Sisteron; and Madame de Cabris, whose headlong licentiousness had become too notorious, kept her company; while Gabriel Honoré, languished, half-naked and diseased, in a damp dungeon in Vincennes.

This we have from the marquis's own account. Writing to his brother, the bailli, he says:—

"Four days ago I met Monpezat, whom I have not seen for twenty years, and who, like an ass, drew on himself a regular set-down.

"'Is your action with madame la marquise finished?' he said to me. 'I have gained it,' I replied. 'And where is she?' 'In a convent.' 'And your son, where is he?' 'In a convent.' 'And your daughter in Provence?' 'In a convent.' 'Have you, then, contracted to people convents?' 'Yes, sir, and had you been my son, you should have been in one long enough since.'"*

But Mirabeau contrived to encircle himself with friends. M. Boucher, his governor, treated him

* Fils Adop. ii. 185.

so kindly, that Mirabeau always called him his good angel. Dupont de Nemours acted as adviser general, and managed all his out-door affairs. M. Lenoir used his influence with the ministry, and Madame du Saillant with the marquis. All their united efforts were nullified for a long time by the unfortunate quarrel between the marquis and marchioness; for weekly almost came out printed pleadings for her, all abusing the marquis, and introducing, of course, Mirabeau's imprisonment: which was too favourable a topic to omit; and several of the most violent the marquis attributed falsely to his son: all which tended, of course, to widen the division between them.

In the course of time, Mirabeau's situation grew to be such, and the captivity had been so lengthy, that it cried out thunder-tongued to the marquis, denouncing shame against him for his inhumanity. For, devoid of money, Mirabeau's raiment had not been re-supplied, and he was destitute of the common necessaries of clothing; added to which, inflammation of the face haunted him: so much so that, at times, his eyes were closed entirely, and blindness was feared. These things coming to the knowledge of the ministry, there was a probability of their interference, and ordering the release of the prisoner. The marquis therefore determined to take steps himself in that direction: not desiring any but himself to interfere with his son.

We, therefore, find him, in May 1780, when Mirabeau had been three years within a few days in his prison, coming to the conclusion, that when his wife and the Marquis of Marignane should consent to his release, it should take place. This gave rise to another almost incredible shoal of letters.

First, there go tender appeals to sweet sister Saillant, to use her benign influence with the little marchioness; then, long and hot appeals direct to his wife, waxing ever hotter and hotter, and more eloquent, until even the stern father pronounces them models, and all their readers melt into tears over them, so touching are they. But no pleading, no intercession could touch the heart of the old Marquis de Marignane; who vehemently refused all conciliation, and launched out into terrible imprecations even at the sound of Mirabeau's name. As for his wife, she displayed herself to be a weak, selfish woman; for, though she acknowledged her desire for a reunion with her husband, she took no measures for procuring it, and suffered herself to be entirely governed by her father. Living the gayest of the gay, as a wealthy widow, queen of the Court of Love at Aix, there was little inducement for her to bestir herself on behalf of her imprisoned husband. "If she could see him by her side free," she said, "she should rejoice beyond expression; but the trouble of acquiring that freedom she

could in no wise undertake:" and so the apathetic little woman went on in her round of gaiety, and soon ceased even to answer his letters.

But by this time several fortuitous events contributed to bring about his release. In the first place, the ministry had become exceedingly rusty about the Marquis of Mirabeau's lettres-de-cachet: positively refusing to take part any more in his private persecutions; secondly, the Marchioness of Mirabeau had just recommenced her suit, with prospect of success, and this disgraceful litigation was the scandal of the place: as Mirabeau possessed, or was thought to possess, influence with his singular mother, it was considered that perhaps he might arrange an amicable agreement, and so do away with a new law-suit; and thirdly, very likely the marquis was growing extremely weary of the incessant appeals for his son which inundated him from all quarters, and perhaps there might be a little compunction of conscience. Certain, however, it is, that on December 13th, 1780, after a captivity of three years and a half, with his brother-in-law du Saillant, he stepped forth from Vincennes, and bade a glad adieu to prison-life for ever!

He had grown during his confinement; but was so miserably clad, that the very first act his brother-in-law had to do for him, was to carry him forthwith to Paris and outfit him afresh. He had then once more gained that dearest heritage

of man, his liberty: and yet his prospects were none of the brightest. Without occupation, without connections, with a name much soiled, and a questionable character; with no income: for his father declined allowing any to him; he stood, thus, with no resources, save his inexhaustible intellect: with the world and a life before him!

BOOK III.

THE TRAVELLING VOLCANO.

Bleibe nicht am Boden heften,
Frisch gewagt und frisch hinaus!
Kopf und Arm mit heitern Kräften,
Ueberall sind sie zu Haus;
Wo wir uns der Sonne freuen,
Sind wir jede Sorgen los;
Das wir uns in ihr zerstreuen,
Darum ist die Welt so gross.

GOETHE.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

FREEDOM—CONCILIATION—SOPHIE—PONTARLIER.

1780—1782.

[1780.] THOSE who have witnessed combats between the lion and other wild animals, will say, that when the door of his cell is withdrawn, the lion generally walks forth with a measured stride, and proceeds with the calmest and most leisurely steadiness to mark his adversary, his strengths and weaknesses; and then, with a toss of the mane and a loud roar, flies fiercely to the combat. Even so was Mirabeau on his enlargement from Vincennes. He came forth placidly enough, and for a year occupied himself with surveying minutely and dispassionately his actual position; until he had discovered what there was for him to do, and then doing it in a manner peculiarly his own.

[1780.] Notwithstanding the marquis had released him, he still positively refused an interview, although then in Paris. Shortly after his release we find him writing to the bailli:—"I shall not permit him to see me so soon; I did, however, find myself face to face with him, as I was coming out of Desjobert's* the other day: I found he has a piercing eye, and a strong and healthy appearance; he bowed his head, and drew as much on one side as possible, and I went on my way."† Such was the recognition between a father and son who for nine years had not seen each other! In judging Mirabeau, it should ever be remembered, that, despite this unjust treatment, he could appreciate the high talent of his father, and always loved him; scarcely even permitting only a passing testy expression to escape him. A day or two after his enlargement, while visiting his brother-in-law du Saillant's hôtel, on coming before a portrait of the marquis, he stopped for a considerable space, until tears started to his eyes, and in a choked voice he exclaimed, "My poor father!" and so passed on. There is beauty in that small circumstance.

Debarred from the parental mansion, and, for fear of a rencontre with the marquis, from that of du Saillant as well, Mirabeau took up his quarters with M. Boucher, his late good governor, under the name of M. Honoré; employing his time in a praiseworthy effort: which has, however, given rise to the most malignant falsehoods. The Marchioness of Mirabeau

* The marquis's lawyer. † Fils Adop. vol. iii. 142.

had lost, as we stated, her fourteen years' law-suit, and had been lodged in a convent by her husband; but she almost immediately commenced another far more vigorous one, which was filling all France with fresh scandal, when Mirabeau was released. The marquis published the foulest charges against the marchioness, and she in return favoured him with similar pleasing marks of her affection. Disgusted with such childish and disgraceful behaviour, Mirabeau endeavoured to prevail upon his mother to cease her infuriated clamours. She was agitating for a total separation of body and goods, and Mirabeau, in an interview with her about a fortnight after his release, used all his influence to persuade her to accept a bodily separation with an allowance, and so hush up the matter quietly and for ever. Not only would she not listen to his proposals, but she loaded him with vituperation, and pressed on even more eagerly and abusively, until in a few months she finally gained her point. This well-intentioned proceeding has drawn down the flippant censure of the historian, that he "made his peace with his father by attacking the reputation of his mother;"* whereas, the truth is, there does not exist, nor ever did exist, any document or other evidence proving that he ever even blamed his mother. Advice he offered, which was rejected with abuse and scorn, and, chiefly on the marchioness's part, intercourse ceased between them, but that was all; and so far from "making his peace with his

* Alison, vol. ii. p. 22.

father," it was not for some months after, when this abortive attempt at reconciliation was forgotten, that the marquis permitted him to behold him: and he did not even then properly make peace at all.

Mirabeau resided, as has been said, at Boucher's, and was chiefly employed in bringing his affairs to a correct point of sight for several months; while his sister pertinaciously persisted in her applications to the marquis to receive him, but without avail. On the 18th of May, the marchioness won her cause, and a matter of pride connected with this, led to Mirabeau being permitted to return to his father's house. Madame de Mirabeau's friends had asserted that the success of the marquis was to be the signal for Mirabeau's pardon and return; the wish, therefore, of proving that to be wrong, added to the united supplications of Boucher, Dupont, and Madame du Saillant, caused Mirabeau on the 20th to be presented by Boucher to his acrid and singular father. The marquis thus describes the interview:—

"Boucher and the family suddenly brought me Honoré, and, as he knelt upon the ground, the chevalier (de Scépeaux) embraced me, saying, '*This is the prodigal son.*' I said to Honoré, giving him my hand, 'that I had long since pardoned the enemy; that I was giving that to the friend; and that one day I hoped to be able to bless the son.' I have found him much stouter, especially about the shoulders, neck, and head. He has our figure, construction, and manner, except his own mercurial

temperament; his locks are very beautiful, his eyes also; his forehead is open; he is much less studied in accent than formerly, but rather so yet; of a natural air otherwise, and much less ruddy; beyond this he is as you have seen him."*

Directly after this, he accompanied the marquis down to Bignon (prostitute de Pailly taking a trip to Switzerland to evade him), where he remained some eight months arranging his plans for the future, and drawing out the designs for his coming campaigns. During this period, he appears to have stood in the highest ranks in his father's favour; which may be attributed to two things—the irresistible seducing power of Mirabeau's tongue, and the absence of the bird of ill omen, de Pailly. It was during his residence here that the beautiful episode of love between him and Sophie was for ever closed. If that secluded love-life in Amsterdam was one of the cheeriest pictures conceivable, so is the termination of it all the most melancholy.

Beware of jealousy—it is the green-eyed monster—

A short time before Mirabeau's release from Vincennes, Sophie's confinement had been much mitigated, and she was permitted to receive visitors. Among these came a certain M. de Rancourt, whose visits growing numerous and ever more lengthy, and being assiduously reported to Mirabeau, and Sophie in her letters as assiduously forgetting to mention

* Fils Adop. iii. 159.

anything about it, as well as her letters growing much cooler, jealousy arose in the heart of Mirabeau; and, like everything else with which he mingled, it was jealousy in real red-hot fire-earnestness, and no milk-and-water substitute therefor. These visits still continuing, immediately after his release Mirabeau vented his feelings in several angry and upbraiding epistles: answered unfortunately, not by explanations or denials, but by recrimination and counter-upbraiding; and matters looked very rupture-like, when Dr. Ysabeau, the convent physician, proposed an interview, which was eagerly accepted. As all intercourse between the lovers was expressly prohibited, this had to take place covertly. On the 19th of July, in the evening, Mirabeau rode from Bignon to Nogent-sur-Vernisson, nine miles from Gien; at which place Dr. Ysabeau awaited him. Having disguised himself as a pedlar, with the doctor and a nun for witnesses, he succeeded in reaching the cell of Sophie. It was four years and two months since they last beheld each other; and then, amid tears and despairing groans, and god-defying poison-threats, and deep earnest vows of everlasting constancy and love, they parted: and *now!*—O heaven! but it was pitiful. Instead of rushing to each other's arms with wild transportive rapture, and mingling, silent-stricken, in one soul-absorbing embrace, no sooner are they met, than lo! sharp as a keen-edged sabre, arise sarcasms and upbraidings between them: soon, alas! merging into open quarrel; shrill woman's vehemence mixing

with man's tempestuous indignation, until in mutual rage they part once more, never again to behold each other upon earth: and thus the fair porcelain vase of a delightful love-romance, on which the eye was charmed to look, in the rash heat of a mad moment lies shivered by one accursed blow!

O weep, ye that have tears to shed, for this tristful episode; for it is very tear-worthy. Weep for the ungoverned passions of our race, how they fume, and toss and roar, and foam billowy, ravaging and devastating the green shore-lands of our life! It has been written and oft repeated, that there is no Love without Jealousy; but I say, and will affirm it, that there is no love *with*. How could I, O parted and beloved! *love* thee—which means, worship thee as the nearest revelation of God given unto me on this world—how could I love thee, did I imagine thou wert a poor, frail, changeful thing? To receive a plighted troth, and to believe in that pledge, never doubting and never suspecting, that alone *is* love; to doubt anxiously, feverishly, and watch eagerly and inquiringly, *that* may be sceptic-selfishness, but it is blasphemy to name *it* LOVE.

However excited might have been the feelings of the twain at the moment of quarrel, a reaction ensued; for Sophie suffered for many days after with ophthalmia, brought on by excessive weeping, while Mirabeau was afflicted with a deep depression of spirit, much augmented by the death of his "good angel of Vincennes," M. Boucher. But, over and

above mourning, Mirabeau had something more important to do; and he did it.

Two things clearly demanded instantaneous attention—the reversal of the Pontarlier edict, and the reunion with his wife. The first his safety and his interests demanded; for while that remained he was liable to be arrested any moment, and no legacy or heritage could be possessed by him. The latter, the perpetuity of the name and race loudly called for. But it was an intricate affair: as we saw, in our last chapter, the countess, residing in festivity and married licence under the entire governance of her father, had ever expressed most anxious solicitude for a reunion with her husband; but had also ever manifested a strange repugnance for active exertion. "Where there's a will, there's a way;" and that she had no will was now made manifest, by her expressing her resolve, so soon as Mirabeau's enlargement was reported to her, of suing for a judicial separation both from "bed and board": this suit Mirabeau had to appeal against, with a view of re-establishing his marital rights. It was, therefore, self-evident, that it was advisable to wash off the unpleasantness of the Pontarlier sentence before entering upon this domestic affair: accordingly he resolved to commence at once.

With this primary resolve the marquis agreed; but the unanimity did not extend to the manner of proceeding. It seems that there existed a kind of legal documents, entitled, "Letters of Abolition," and

"Letters of Cassation"; these were issued by the King (which meant the minister) at his own arbitrary will, and had the effect of annulling any sentence or sentences passed upon the recipient; thereby freeing him from all apprehension as to consequences. Mirabeau was urged warmly by the marquis to apply to the ministry for one of these papers; which would, of course, have been granted. But as this was gained by interest, and not justice; and as, moreover, it would leave the sentence upon Madame de Monnier intact; despite his rupture with that lady, he indignantly repelled all idea thereof, with such earnestness that even the marquis did not urge the point. The next question was, the tone in which to commence proceedings. Here, again, was a difference. The marquis and his lawyers had examined into the case, and had decided that it was, judicially, all but hopeless; and therefore recommended a proposal of accommodation, to be made in an humble and submissive manner. But Mirabeau had also examined into his cause, and had arrived at a far opposite conclusion: he had decided that, so far from it being hopeless, it was so decidedly the reverse, that he should, instead of adopting a truckling demeanour, assume the highest grounds, and defy his opponents rather than otherwise; and the marquis, unable to resist personal intercourse with his son, calmly allowed him to "go his own gait:" which he did impetuously enough; proceeding, as was his wont, by quick and decisive steps.

[1782.] On the 2nd of February, with heart elate, sure-trusting in his ultimate success, and spirit conscious of its own unlimited resources, he departed from Bignon to Pontarlier, on his bold and perilous enterprise; for had he lost, it was entirely in the judge's power to make the punishment capital, did he choose to do so. He took with him an advocate named Desbirons, ostensibly to manage the whole affair; but who, as he himself mentions with admiration and wonder, soon dwindled into a mere secretary, working altogether by the advice of the person he had come to advise.

There were two parties concerned in the sentence on the opposite side to Mirabeau: the de Ruffeys and M. de Monnier; but as that old man was then dying, his cause was entirely managed by his daughter, Madame de Valdahon: who was of course much interested, in a pecuniary point of view, in maintaining the edict as regarded Sophie: the weak old man did not even know what was doing in his name.

On the 6th they arrived at Dijon; and Desbirons, under Mirabeau's instructions, succeeded in inducing Madame de Ruffey to promise, that if she did not go so far as to join in Mirabeau's appeal, she would at least advocate the most advantageous terms of compromise. So much being gained in that quarter, he proceeded to Pontarlier, to see what might be effected with Madame de Valdahon; arriving there on the 8th: but whence, however, he passed almost

immediately to Verrières. On the same day he despatched Desbirons to obtain an interview with Madame de Valdahon, and propose Mirabeau's terms; but so certain was she of the tenability of the sentence, and so anxious that Sophie's dowry and portion should remain in her father's hands, that she positively refused to see the advocate at all. On the 9th, Mirabeau embodied his proposal in a condensed but eloquent letter, written in the name of Desbirons; but this was likewise unnoticed by the obdurate lady. Seeing, therefore, that there was nothing left but to make the formal law appeal, Mirabeau, on the 12th, surrendered himself prisoner at the Castle of Joux, and then applied for a provisionary release. This was granted on the 16th, but never put into action; owing to a counter appeal made by M. Sombarde, King's Procurator and Public Prosecutor. Notwithstanding the dignified nobility of Mirabeau's proceedings, and voluntary surrender of himself, this honourable conduct was far from being reciprocated; for during his imprisonment he was confined in the worst quarter of the castle, amid squalidity and disease.

About a week after his incarceration, he issued the first of the *Mémoires* or *Cases*, which, although merely written for the judges and the lawyers, soon worked their way to the public, until France rang with the name of their concoctor. This was entitled "*The first Case for consultation for the Count of Mirabeau against the Marquis of Monnier*," and con-

sisted of an acute examination of the legality of the proceedings; but treated in such a brilliant and masterly style, as entirely to banish the dulness so common to law discussions. His arguments were masterly. He had been condemned for "rape of seduction:" this he demonstrated was illegal; since the law expressly stated, that such crime could only exist between unmarried persons. Adultery was the crime to be charged with, he said; but then the witnesses to the perpetration thereof being residents in a foreign country, and the deed also committed there, he contended that a French tribunal could not receive evidence from such, nor sit in judgment on a crime committed out of the kingdom. The whole concludes with a withering invective against such ignorant decision as that of May 1778, whereby a noble had been disgraced, and an amiable lady imprisoned for five years.

With this Case the marquis expressed himself well pleased, and spoke in the highest praise of his son to the bailli. "At present," he writes, "I see him in his saddle: he sits well, and will have the real advantage before the public of entirely exculpating his accomplice; which he was anxious to do at any cost. You have no idea of your nephew upon great occasions: in proportion as it would be dangerous to measure him then, and apply the result to his daily life, so may we count him in a great crisis, far better than a wise man."*

* Fils Adop. iii. 241.

But this Case growing too public, and the rumour of his son's lawsuit becoming an every-day topic, and, moreover, Madame de Pailly coming from her sojourn in Switzerland, he very speedily changed, and wrote reprehending it.

On the appearance of this Case, his judges, after a smart discussion, decided that the second argument was fallacious, and that they *had* the power of sitting in judgment upon a Frenchman for crimes committed abroad. On the 5th of March, therefore, he had to undergo a confrontation with two Swiss witnesses, which lasted for ten hours; Mirabeau cross-questioning and examining rigidly, and making "them belie and contradict themselves," as the bailli said, "although they had been well instructed and crammed."

The Appeal of the Prosecutor Sombarde, against the decree granting a provisionary release—a kind of semi-victory—was prosecuted in the chamber of Tournelle, in the Besançon parliament; at which tribunal Mirabeau pursued his demands, by issuing his *Second Case for Consultation.* Such noise had the first made, that this, although a purely private paper of little but private interest, was published at the printer's own cost, "I only paying," says Mirabeau, "for the reserved copies—the others they devour."

The second case was much more lengthy than the previous one, but not less splendid in composition. It consists of a survey of all the premises laid down by his adversaries, the great majority of which he scatters to the wind beyond the chance of a revival; of a

repetition of his old argument concerning seduction; of a statement of the whole affair with Madame Monnier, as it really occurred. After having vividly demonstrated the advantages of his position; having shown that the illegality of the old sentence, concluded in the indecently brief space of half an hour, was so gross, that did he prosecute his judges he would be certain of success, he reiterates his original offers of conciliation.

Though this second effusion attained far higher popularity than the former one, it gained even less favour in the eyes of the marquis; who positively prohibited any more publications of a similar nature, asserting that another would kill him. Nor had it the desired effect with the Besançon parliament, for they almost directly afterwards refused to allow his provisionary release; upon which he appealed from the chamber of Tournelle to the Great Chamber, and hurled forth a stormy *Third Case for Consultation.* This was shorter again, and only written to bring out his strongest argument. The law directed that no public prosecutor should conduct a case, whenever he was with in a certain affinity to the plaintiff. Sombarde had all along behaved in the most glaringly unjust and tyrannical manner; which Mirabeau exposed in fierce wrath, revealing the further noteworthy fact, that he was within the forbidden degree related to the Marquis of Monnier.

This was far more successful, and as du Saillant arrived at this time armed with all the weight of the

marquis's name and authority, proposals for a compromise were submitted to Mirabeau; but, as they only related to himself without freeing Sophie, only to be scornfully refused. Thus runs his answer:— "I have said to my father, and I repeat to you, before God and man, that no one has a right to interfere in my cause, in my dispute, without my advice, without my consent; and in this firm conviction I tell you that I will have no accommodation, unless the procedure be arrested; that I will sign nothing wherein my pure and simple absolution, that of Madame de Monnier, the restitution of her dowry, an annuity for her, and the payment of my expenses be not included."

When it is remembered that with Sophie he had now irrevocably broken, and that, had he abandoned her cause, he could have been at liberty in an instant, no man can refuse saying that here at least was a truly noble action.

But victory soon followed; for Mirabeau had rendered himself beloved by his friends, enthusiastically admired by the public, and feared by his opponents, as a man to whose daring there was no limit. On the 14th of August the deed of compromise was finally signed. By it, the sentence passed upon Mirabeau and Sophie was annulled. She was separated from the marquis in bed, board, and effects; her dowry reverted to her, and an annuity of 50*l.* was settled on her, with the only reservation that she should dwell in a convent until the death of the Marquis of Mon-

nier. Thus, after a tedious residence of six months in an uncomfortable and unwholesome prison, Mirabeau once more came forth to freedom, with the pleasing consciousness that he had acted irreproachably; that with his iron force of mind and vigour of intellect he had won for himself and Sophie, peace, pardon, and a decisive victory.

Thus terminates entirely and for ever the love-episode of Sophie; and as that lady now retires from these pages, a few words regarding her ultimate fate may not be uninteresting. She remained at the convent at Gien until the death of her husband, which happened eight months after Mirabeau's victory; after which event, her mother being dead, she declined returning to her family at Dijon, but opened a small house in Gien. Her passionate temperament was now saddened down into a settled melancholy: she still brooded over her love-days, and unfortunate rupture with Mirabeau. But after a little she began to go once again into society, and met with a gentleman about her own age, by name de Poterat; who, like herself, having had a disappointment, was of a like despondent nature, and with whom an attachment, more that of friends than lovers, ensued. After a little period they agreed to marry; but unhappily death stepped in, and Sophie, who had seen her former lover fly off like a fire-torrent, had to mark this one die away, day by day, by the silent process of consumption. On the 8th of September, 1789, she beheld her *fiancé* depart away from her in

her very arms. Dr. Ysabeau (the doctor who procured the last interview with Mirabeau) forcibly dragged her from the corpse; and, in her anguish, they arranged that on the succeeding morning he should call for her, and carry her to his house, wherein henceforth she should reside. After the doctor had departed, she issued orders to her servant lad to call her at a certain hour on the following morning, and then retired to her room. She collected all her papers, and wrote a letter of instructions, and then retired into a small closet. Every crevice and chink therein she closed: she then placed two chafing dishes of charcoal on either side of her; flung herself into an arm-chair, tied her legs firmly together; bound one arm, and then with the other set fire to the charcoal, and so perished, in the thirty-seventh year of her age, the victim of parental scheming and heartless calculation.

Alas! by charcoal-fume alone, in reality, she did not die: when on the morrow her situation was discovered and the alarm given, a magistrate hastened to the spot accompanied by a surgeon. To the prurient or too-scientific mind of this idiot, the possibility of life remaining, which was so likely in such a mode of suicide, never suggested itself; but it immediately occurred to him, without any external reason, that the lady was very likely *enceinte*, and so he dexterously ripped her open and discovered that there was no warrant for any such supposition: discovered, moreover, on the arrival of Dr. Ysabeau, that

this delicate, laudable, and exceedingly scientific operation had been performed upon a living woman; from whom life was not removed, but merely suspended for the time being.

So perished the beautiful and passionate Sophie; over whose tomb might indeed be graven, the sublime words of Thekla:

> Ich habe genossen das irdishe Glück,
> Ich habe gelebt und geliebet!

CHAPTER II.

INACTION IN SWITZERLAND—ACTION AT AIX.

1782—1783.

[1782] In his Cases, Mirabeau had attacked with his usual vehemence his severe persecuting jailor M. de St. Mauris, and a military relative of his, M. Petit. This attack was all the more galling, insomuch as it was true and incontrovertible; and the twain could only brave out the obloquy thus showered upon them, by talking far and wide of what they *would* do to Mirabeau when he was released. His very first step, therefore, upon leaving the Castle of Joux, was to proceed to Pontarlier; and there, for four successive days, he occupied himself in appearing in the streets and every other public place therein, that St. Mauris and friend might not be enabled to say he shirked an interview.

Although the Marquis of Mirabeau had approved of the late appeal of his son, and even joined his influence to it towards the close of the litigation, he

had refused all pecuniary aid; and Mirabeau had therefore been compelled to raise the necessary expenses, by borrowing from the Procurator Michaud and other friends. His father also declined discharging these liabilities; and so, being left entirely to himself, he crossed over to Neufchâtel, in order to dispose of some of the manuscript works compiled in Vincennes: the essay on *Lettres-de-Cachet*, and *L'Espion devalisé.*

At Neufchâtel, he remained two months in a state of the most abject depression of spirits, and the completest inaction; with nothing but bodeful ideas of death by duelling, flight abroad, and other atrabiliar notions, floating dimly through his brain. He thus vividly describes his untoward situation to his kind sister.

"Behold me *free*—But what boots my liberty? Disavowed by my father; forgotten and perhaps hated by my mother, for having desired to serve her; dreaded by my uncle; haunted by my creditors, of whom not one has been paid, although they deprived me of everything under the pretext of satisfying them; menaced by my wife, or by those who govern her; stripped of all things, of revenue, of occupation, of credit;—ah! please God that my enemies (St. Mauris & Co.) be not as cowardly as they are perverse, that they may respond to my hope, that they may come to the field where I await them! But sister mine, they will not come.—If I go to find them, they would stigmatize me as a bully, an

assassin perchance! Oh! but I have need of one good sword-stroke!" *

From this mood he brightened into the more sensible idea of going abroad: he offered, if a pension were settled upon him, to leave France, and never again set foot within its confines. This, the bailli and the marquis alike approved of, but the latter would not consent to grant any pension. The bailli of Mirabeau had been piqued at the publication of the Pontarlier *Mémoires,* because they caused the name to be too much intermingled with scandal, and because the marquis did not approve of them; he therefore expressed great repugnance at receiving Mirabeau in Provence, and the mortification this treatment roused, and the consciousness of its being altogether undeserved, chiefly made Mirabeau so anxious to leave his native country and all his connections for ever.

The clear, kind arguments of Madame du Saillant, however, banished this crotchet, and awakened his slumbering spirit to its duty; while at the same time, the marquis overcame the bailli's scruples, and on the 3d of October Mirabeau left Neufchâtel for Provence, to enter upon his other Hercules labour: that of recovering his wife.

During his residence in Switzerland, he had not, however, been entirely inactive, but produced a long pamphlet of undoubted genius, and exuberance of eloquence. It was on the affairs of Geneva. That

* Fils Adop. iii. 279.

city and republic, from its intestine divisions and proximity to the frontiers of France, had ever been under the influence thereof; but latterly, the reforming or patriot body having come into collision with the aristocracy, the King of France had sent troops to the aid of the aristocrats, whereby the people's clamour was effectually extinguished, and numerous municipals and other men of standing, as Dumont, Duroverai, Clavière, and others, saw good to resign offices and fly. Looking at this wreck of justice and freedom, Mirabeau addressed a letter to the Count of Vergennes, the war-minister, wherein he demonstrated, that by their present course, they were driving every sensible man from the city; and calling upon him by all claims, alike of common policy and justice, to break this infernal pact, and, withdrawing all foreign military aid, leave the Genevese to settle their own quarrels quietly among themselves, not ridden roughshod over by a few aristocrats, backed by French guards. He likewise wrote another equally lengthy one to M. de Fleury, comptroller-general, exposing the baneful effects of excise and customs, and advocating the principles of unfettered commerce.

Much as the amiability of the bailli of Mirabeau's character excites the admiration of such as may peruse his numerous letters, as inserted in the *Fils Adoptif* (but which space and expedience compel us to omit well nigh entirely), it is very apparent that at bottom he was essentially a weak-minded man. He

is first introduced to us in connection with Mirabeau, by condemning him bitterly, without ever having seen him, on the sole evidence of his father's capricious letters; and agreeing with the infamous design of sending him to Surinam to perish there by disease. No sooner, however, did Mirabeau visit him in person, after his Corsican campaign, than his censure changed instantly to the warmest eulogiums, and all his energies were devoted to a reconciliation between the father and son; which accordingly did take place in the Limousin. Since, however, parting with Mirabeau, several years had passed over the bailli, and he had now elapsed into his original notion of his nephew, and for several months refused positively to receive him; and even, when he had at last consented to do so, wrote, while Mirabeau was on his way, in this strain—

"I confess to you, that I cannot restrain myself from desiring that he may not come; for I cannot hide from you (the marquis) that I have conceived an aversion to this man, which is overpowering, after the letters he has written to me, and the copies of those he has written to you and to several others, which he has sent me. *I see, in all an insupportable pride, a confidence which proves that he believes but in himself*, and such a furious divergence from my ideas, that I think it entirely impossible to accustom myself to him."*

And yet, when Mirabeau again appeared in person

* Fils Adop. iii. 307.

once more was the bailli conquered, and for ever now; he *did* "accustom himself to him," and not only that, he also patronized, applauded, defended, admired, and loved him. The sentence in italics is noteworthy, insomuch as this same self-confidence the bailli therein censures, will be found, on examination, to be the one great basis and essential of one of those beings whom we denominate great men.

On the 19th of October, in the evening, he reached the Château; being received by his uncle as coldly as a man could receive Mirabeau. But the populace, although he owed many of them heavy and long standing debts, evinced much enthusiasm and joy at again beholding the seigneur, whose broad philanthropy had won their hearts during his last sojourn there; for bonfires blazed redly on the eminences, flinging out lurid gleams into the dull grey evening, and loud cheers rent the air: to the infinite chagrin of the marquis, who did not admire his son's popularity at all.

Mirabeau's second victory over the bailli was soon accomplished: on the 19th of October, he arrived at the Castle of Mirabeau, his uncle "doing all he could to receive him coldly," and on the 8th of November commences another series of exculpatory letters, defending Mirabeau and expostulating with his strange parent. But to win over the bailli was not his business in Provence—it was to win his wife; and he soon set about it.

This cause was so hopeless, on the very face of it,

that none but a man like Mirabeau, "believing in himself"—that none but "a demon of the impossible," would for one moment have attempted it. The countess, formally, was the chief person; but, in reality, was a mere puppet in the hands of her father and his legal advisers. Attachment—"'t would be huge blasphemy to name it *love*"—for her husband seems to have still remained; but it was mollified by a passion for gaiety, and a natural laziness of temperament: she would have liked a reconcilement could it have come of itself, without trouble; could she, for instance, have awoke some morning and discovered Mirabeau by her side, the breach healed, and a reunion established; but to arouse and bestir herself, to take energetic measures, defy her father, and dismiss her interested advisers, and *so* end all speedily; for conduct like *that* she had no faculty. Might there not also be a lurking resentment for the broken marriage-vows, deep rankling in the brooding heart of woman: which no man can reprobate? This temperament of his wife's, added to the incalculable disadvantage of not being able to obtain an interview, were immense obstacles to his success: but the chief one was the ceaseless and virulent hate entertained by the Marquis of Marignane against his son-in-law; for which no cause can be discovered. This hate was also heightened by his having had a quarrel with the Marquis of Mirabeau, owing to the Friend of Man's interference in the disposal of some entails when his grandson was yet living; which, of course,

ended in coolness, and well-nigh an entire rupture. This fierce hatred of the Marquis of Marignane towards Mirabeau, was assiduously fed by the collateral line of the Marignanes of Grasse; to whose interest it, of course, was that the Countess of Mirabeau should have no more children. In addition to all this, Mirabeau was not backed authoritatively by his father; and as *his* name was not at that period, and in that neighbourhood, in what may be called good credit, the sinews of war were not as accessible, or as limitless, as was desirable. Against all these disadvantages, arguing almost indubitably his ultimate loss, Mirabeau determined to proceed; and, as with him, as with all other great men in all ages, to will was to commence and do, he did not long tarry in passivity, but action was begun forthwith.

Throughout the whole of this embarrassing and delicate affair we find Mirabeau deporting himself uniformly with a temperance and prudence highly creditable to him, especially when his fiery disposition is considered; and which forms a striking contrast to the unreasonable and vulgar abuse so plentifully used by the Marignanes.

He first tried the effect of conciliation, and wrote several straightforward and moving letters, praying for an amicable private adjustment; in which he was backed by the bailli, who had some little personal intercourse. The answers to these were frigidly polite for a season, but soon grew coarse and insolent, and ended finally in their being returned un-

opened, with defiance and with scorn. He could not even gain an interview: his wife was jealously watched lest she might accord such a favour, for his adversaries well knew that one interview would gain his cause; no woman's heart being proof against the seducing rhetoric of his tongue.

[1783.] All hopes of an arrangement being thus dissipated, it became necessary to take immediate and effective measures to prosecute the case in a public court. Many obstacles stood in his way here. The Marquis of Marignane, during the negociation, had privately retained all the barristers of the neighbourhood, save one: M. Jaubert, a clever and acute lawyer, but unable to achieve any very great triumph in pleading. Another young advocate, M. Pellenc, having become interested in Mirabeau's cause, unsolicited (and anonymously for some time) supplied him with opinions and materials; thereby establishing a life-enduring friendship. The Marquis of Mirabeau, on his part, also refused positively to lend his influence to the case in any way, to the infinite disgust of the bailli; whose allegiance to his elder *economique*-expounding brother was fast merging into mutiny. For this conduct he assigned no open reason, except a dislike to having the name so perpetually mixed in lawsuits: and pleasantly oblivious of the fact that it was by his own especial request that this demand for a reunion was made at all. Beside all this, the Marignanes spared no artifice to ruin Mirabeau: the Marquis of Marignane even used

his influence with the procurator-general, M. Castallon, to denounce his Essay on Lettres-de-Cachet to the government, as a seditious work, and thereby end the squabble by another prison-residence. These denunciations, though made, fell to the ground.

Legal proceedings were commenced in form by Mirabeau; who, on the 28th of February, filed a petition for an injunction to be granted, compelling the countess to return and reside with him. On the 8th of March the countess filed a counter-petition, praying that such might not be granted: or, rather, let us say, her relatives of Grasse; for once, when one of Mirabeau's eloquent conciliatory letters was taken to her, the messenger beheld her begging with tears that she might be allowed to open it: from which act, threats and expostulations finally withheld her.* Excessive levity of character, and great weakness rather than natural perversity, were the causes of the unwomanly and unwifelike conduct of the countess; for though her husband's career had not been stainless, neither had hers been so by any means; and in society, though one sees not why it *should* be so, a husband's faithlessness is called a peccadillo, a wife's a sin unpardonable!

On the 11th, Mirabeau filed a second petition for the same purpose, and almost at the same time threw off a pamphlet entitled "*Observations of the Count of Mirabeau upon a portion of his cause*" (Aix, 4to, pp. 73), which is written in the most friendly and

* Fils Adop. iii. 342.

conciliatory spirit, showing that they did not part in ill-will, but in love—giving numerous extracts from the countess's letters during their absence, all breathing affection, and expressing a desire for a speedy reunion—showing that the affair with Sophie had not changed these sentiments (as, indeed, how could it, seeing the letter he had addressed to her from Joux), as she had manifested the same desire when he was in Vincennes—and demonstrating that, since his release therefrom, he had been guilty of no new indiscretion whatever: that, on the contrary, he had removed the danger and stigma of the Besançon sentence, and even added lustre to his name—and ending with a warm appeal to her heart. For charity's sake, we would hope that the Cerberi of Grasse kept this love-breathing pamphlet from the countess; as its only effect was to be read with avidity all over Provence, and to attain a wide celebrity through the other parts of France.

On the 20th of March, Mirabeau, self-reliant, and despising other aid than justice and his innate power, attended by Lord Peterborough and two other English gentlemen, appeared at the bar of the court to plead his own cause. An advocate, famed for his bullying and cross-questioning powers, named Portalis, supported by the Marquis of Marignane and other friends, was there to oppose him. As the rumour of this personal pleading had been well noised abroad, the court was crowded; so much so, that the windows had to be forcibly burst open to

prevent suffocation. The Bailli of Mirabeau was in the court; and, as the character of that individual for moderation and truth is unquestionable, a better account of the effect of Mirabeau's pleading, than the following quiet and unaffected one, cannot be given.

"The count pleaded yesterday; there was, as you would imagine, a crowd. Marignane was there: at the commencement he tittered, at the middle he bent his head—they even assured me that he finished by weeping; as did the greater half of the audience. Marignane, in going out, said,—'He has pleaded with much gentleness and moderation;' *and in reality this man, made for desperate things, found the secret of administering lots of soft sawder to his father-in-law, to his wife, and to praise them much, although at the same time making them appear absurd!*"*

That the moderation of this pleading might be public, and thereby give the lie to the wholesale imputations of brutality and coarseness lavished upon his proceedings by his adversaries (and from which, be it known, nearly every account of this affair has been taken), he almost immediately afterwards published it, together with a tract of four pages, called "*A Summary of the demand of the Countess of Mirabeau to stay proceedings.*" And a day or two after that he issued another pamphlet equally moderate and conciliatory, called "*The Petition of the Count of*

* Fils Adop. iii. 370.

Mirabeau presented to our seigneurs of Parliament." (Aix, 4to. pp. 39.) On the 24th, triumph crowned these efforts; by a decree being pronounced ordering the countess to return to her husband forthwith, or else to withdraw into a convent, and there receive his visits.

This decision appears to have maddened the Marignanes to such a degree, that all sense of honour and decency evaporated. Not only did the countess refuse to comply with this injunction, but her father threatened Mirabeau with a publication, the disastrous consequences whereof were indubitable. This was the printing and dispersion of a series of letters the Marquis of Mirabeau had addressed to his then friend Marignane several years previous, when he had been persecuting and restraining with a rod of iron his unfortunate son. These letters, embracing a period of several years of prison-life, are couched in the most extravagant and slanderous language, stigmatising Mirabeau as devoid of any good qualities whatsoever. Regardless of honour, of the common courtesies of life; thinking only that anything defamatory of Mirabeau must enhance his cause; and blind to everything save the ultimate success of that cause; he announced his intention of publishing these. Foreseeing the utter ruin of his case (the Marignanes had appealed to a higher court) if these foul parental libels saw the light, Mirabeau strained every energy to prevent their publication.

He proposed to wave any advantages of legality

or eloquence he might possess, and submit the case to the arbitration of four noblemen, or four magistrates; and the Marquis of Mirabeau, the guilty causer of all the danger, stirred up to indignant wrath at this flagrant breach of common delicacy and the laws of correspondence, addressed on the 12th and 14th of April two remonstrative letters to the Marquis of Marignane, couched in such language as the crotchety old Friend of Man well knew how to use when occasion demanded.

But it was in vain; and the Marquis of Mirabeau's interference too late: already, on the 6th of April, the obnoxious volume had appeared. Its title was, "*A Case for Consultation, and Counsel's Opinion thereon, for the Countess of Mirabeau*" (Aix, 4to. pp. 162.) Whatever immediate effect this brochure may have had upon the case, nothing could tend more to the justification of Mirabeau's conduct in this affair than this justly-called libel; nothing could contrast more glaringly than the manly, and even gentle, pleading, the temperate and courteous, to the minutest etiquette-law, publications of Mirabeau; and that heterogeneous concoction of fatherly slander, written in excitement, prejudice, and ill-temper: and of foul-mouthed Billingsgate abuse, purely original.

Curbing his all too wild spirit, and restraining his impetuous and over-boiling heart to due temperance, Mirabeau set himself to reply to this; which he did in a manner creditable alike to his heart and his intellect. Rarely had man had a more unpleasant

task to perform: he had either to prove his father a tyrant and a liar, or to run great risks of his own success. With praiseworthy adroitness he maintained a middle course. Often when he could have proved the false statements, and manifested the evil sources of his father's hate, he refrained from so doing: from delicacy to him; often when he might have exposed his wife's weakness, or perfidy, he magnanimously passed by the opportunity. His chief replies were directed against the shameful breach of confidence in the publication at all of private letters; to exposing the untenability of his adversary's arguments; to boldly and eloquently defending his own position. His reply gave satisfaction to all his relatives, and added incalculably to the immense reputation he was day by day amassing. It was called, "*Observations on a Defamatory Libel, entitled 'A Case for Consultation, and the Counsel's Opinion for the Countess of Mirabeau'*" (Aix, 4to. pp. 202); to which was appended, a "*Counsel's Opinion*" on Mirabeau's own case (4to. pp. 67).

In the mean time, the appeal of the Marignanes to the Grand Chamber of Aix was proceeding in due form; and Mirabeau, perceiving that accommodation was impossible, abandoned the idea, and prepared to bring out all the gigantic powers of reasoning and oratory he so eminently possessed, at the approaching pleading.

On the 23d of May he pleaded, with a force of oratory, astonishing even to those who had witnessed his

former brilliant display, before a large assembly. On the 17th of June he again pleaded to a still more crowded court. But it was on the day of the third pleading that he achieved that splendid triumph of eloquence, which, floating through several years in men's minds, opened to him a deputyship of Aix, in 1789, and prepared the world in some degree for his magnificent career in the National Assembly.

Few individuals have ever in the world's annals succeeded in concentrating such an amount of interest as hung upon this third pleading, even when the topic has been one of general interest; and certainly in a quarrel so purely private as the present, no one man, either before or after, has engrossed so much. A report had spread throughout the town and vicinity of Aix that this final pleading was to be the crowning effort of Mirabeau's oratory, and to such an intensity had the general expectance swollen, that (although the precaution of tripling the guard and police was resorted to) all the barriers, doors, and divisions, were burst through by the crowd: when the court was crammed to suffocation, the windows were forced from the outside; and, when they too were occupied, the roofs of the adjacent houses were taken possession of, in the vain hope that some sound of the word-wonders uttering in the court might be wafted to them.*

For four hours and three-quarters (from 8h. 15m. to 1, P.M.) did Mirabeau, with a rapid eloquence

* Fils Adop. iii. 408.

and vivid earnestness, of which France had till then given no specimens, plead his cause—not with semi-suppliant, calm, persuasive, logic-rhetoric now; but, having torn his truce-flag to ribbons, and unfurled the war-standard, with loud reverberating demands for justice: sparing not, but smiting, at times perhaps too hotly, wheresoever his keen eye saw that a blow would have effect.

If popular enthusiasm, and the general tribute of a people's admiration, which followed this splendid oratorical achievement, can be called a triumph, Mirabeau was most triumphant: but, unfortunately, with a bench of judges, the majority of whom were relatives of his adversaries, justice and genius have less effect than interest and personal expediency; and therefore, on the 5th of July, to the surprise and disgust of the whole province, a decree was pronounced, ordering that affairs should remain in their original position—viz., an entire separation of body and of goods: and so the pleading had been vain, and the cause was lost.

To the superficial observer it may appear singular that after this grand outburst of rhetoric splendour: when, so to speak, Mirabeau's foot was on the throne's step, and he was in part a king over the hearts of men; that he should relapse so suddenly into complete subjectdom, and his life degenerate, from such light-flashing triumphs, into a dull and grovelling insect life for six long years. And yet it is not strange, but natural. No man can rise *above*

la hauteur, as the French say, the height of circumstances; and none but an intrinsically great man can attain *to* that height. In this domestic suit, Mirabeau rose as high as the occasion would admit; and if he sunk into ordinary life once more, it was not that he was not ready to rise again, but that the times were not yet ripe. When they did become ripe, and the harvest of long centuries' dark hell-deeds stood white for the rude wrath-sickle of revolutionary revenge, we shall find him once again rising on wings of glory with the occasion; and with stentorian voice, and daring indomitable spirit, asserting the avenging justice of God; and, Hercules-like, cleansing the foul Pompadour-polluted Capet-stable—and, alas! perishing in so doing.

Here also does this weak, volatile, fickle Countess of Mirabeau pass away from our life-story: let us therefore dismiss her with due notice. After gaining her cause, she plunged zealously into the round of gaieties, for which she had behaved in such an unwifely manner; residing by turns at Aix, at Marignane, and the other numerous châteaux of her father and his friends. But even in the midst of all these festivities and revels, a spirit of regret at times breathes from her correspondence; telling of undeveloped—or say, rather, of smothered—good-feeling still remaining. When Mirabeau was elected deputy for Aix, a portion of the populace proceeded to her residence, praying her to reconcile herself with her admired husband: but sullen pride has a

mighty stronghold in the human heart, and she refused. In 1790, when Mirabeau was at his culmination, his angelic, peace-imparting sister, Madame du Saillant, attempted a re-union; which was about to take place, when death struck down the giant, and all re-union-schemes were ended *so*. When the popular fury tore away from the aristocracy their ill-gotten treasures, the countess emigrated with her father, and resided for a few years in great poverty and distress abroad. In this state, she married the Count of Rocca, a Sardinian officer, and returned to France at the close of 1796. She immediately found out Madame du Saillant, and entered into correspondence with her. On the 24th of April, 1797, her second husband died; and at the same time, almost, her son by him. Being thus solitary and poor, she proceeded to Paris, and abode with Madame du Saillant, at the Hôtel Mirabeau. The remainder of her life was consecrated to the memory of her first and illustrious husband: she occupied his chamber, which she filled with busts and portraits of him; she sang with exquisite feeling and pathos all the melodies she had sung to him in their early marriage-days, which he had loved to hear; she studied his meteoric career incessantly; lavished tenderness and affection on his adopted son (the muddled-brained *Fils Adoptif* himself); and finally, on the 6th of March, 1800, in the same room and bed wherein Mirabeau had died, she sunk with her regrets and sorrows into the sleep of death, and followed him on his unknown journey.

To comment upon this domestic quarrel, and, calmly critical, decide with much self-complaisance which of the twain were right, is not our business. It may be enough to state that the countess was, from her every act and letter, glaringly unsuited to the high intellect of her husband: many deeds natural to one like him, would seem utter insanity to her; and, moreover, the only really strong quality of her disposition was a passionate woman's love for the follies, and fripperies, and gaieties of life; for which she sacrificed her oath, her husband, and, as it ended, her peace of mind: for those latter years of hers were one continued and elaborate repentance.

Oh, my brother and my sister! God-united in the holiest bands this world can know, are love and life so durable that ye can afford to cloud them with your foolish squabbles? Oh! when mad passion runs riot in your hearts, and a hard word is hanging on the tongue, remember how of old time it was said, "a soft answer turneth away wrath;" remember that we are all as brothers and sisters, and have one kind Father, and, ere long, shall have one narrow home. Remember these things, and root out that evil and unruly member rather than speak one angry syllable.

CHAPTER III.

PARIS—BELGIUM—POVERTY—"A NEW HELOISE" —FOR ENGLAND!

1783—1784.

[1783.] ON the very day when the adverse decree was rendered, Mirabeau's high feeling and punctilious sense of honour embroiled him in a private quarrel. Lord Peterborough (grandson of the Lord Peterborough who was ambassador to Spain during the War of the Succession), was walking on the promenade at Aix in company with some ladies, when M. de Galiffet, the richest Provençal landowner, and who was accused of being *particularly* acquainted with the Countess of Mirabeau, saw good, in meeting them, to insult them, by giving a contemptuous glance and refraining from bowing, although intimate with the ladies. Lord Peterborough, inflamed and wrathful, was for castigating him on the spot; but Mirabeau arrested his progress, and insisted upon prosecuting the quarrel; as it was M. Galiffet's connection with the Marignanes that

had induced him to insult persons whom he knew to be friendly to Mirabeau. Accordingly a meeting took place, and Galiffet was wounded: this did not satisfy either of the belligerents, and another meeting was decided upon; and, owing to the interference of the magistrates, it was agreed that they should retire to Vaucluse, and there decide it.

Mirabeau, therefore, departed thither; and after spending an idle week, the only fruits whereof, were some rose-water effusions on the celebrated fountain, finding that his adversary was not forthcoming, he returned to Aix, determined to chastise him.

For several days Galiffet avoided him: but, at last, one morning they met in a secluded street, and Mirabeau, although encumbered with books under his left arm, instantly drew his sword; and, sending their servants to either end of the street to turn aside interruption of all kinds, the enemies set to work. The combat was brief, but furious; and the end was, that the silly millionaire was again wounded, being run through the arm. Both parties were arrested, but on explanation liberated.

This being settled, and his pleadings ended, the hungry appetite of Mirabeau's mind began to look abroad for some new occupation, whereon to devote his energies and talents. His prospects were by no means bright. The Marquis of Mirabeau, with his usual caprice, after having been alternately satisfied and annoyed with the Aix pleadings, had settled down — harlot de Pailly and economy prompting

him—into annoyance. The last magnificent pleading, which had electrified half the nation, seemed to his jaundiced eye, as the speech of a "clatter-box and noodle," (*un claque-dents et un fol*); and he magnanimously expressed his intention of not throwing temptation in his son's way by supplying him too freely with cash. Thus, having a grim back-ground of accumulated debts, no present cash, and small likelihood of any, save from his own brain-sweat; so far as money is concerned, Mirabeau's prospect was of the blackest.

There yet remained one more step to be taken in connection with his law-suit. It seems that, owing to four out of the eight judges being near relatives of the Marquis of Marignane, the sentence had been one of prejudice rather than discretion; and, as in France a majority, not an unanimity, is only required, the verdict was actually rendered in opposition to three of the judges, and the protest of the president himself. This and other legal informalities, decided Mirabeau upon taking the last step remaining: viz., an appeal to the Court of Cassation at Paris. Had this been successful, the Aix proceedings would have been quashed, and the Paris one adopted.

Early in September, therefore, he departed for Paris to push his cause. He took with him an orphan boy aged two, whom he adopted; and who in 1836, favoured the world with the dark-glittering mass of rubbish-hidden facts, called a "Life of Mirabeau, by his Adopted Son." Scandal, ever busy, has

stated that this individual was the *bonâ fide* son of his adopter; but, had Scandal considered it, she would have found that her story was a lie on the face of it. It is known that the mother was a resident in Provence. It was ten years since Mirabeau had last been in that quarter; and, as the boy was but two, it could not have been then that his beginning was so sinfully commenced. This latter residence had been but for eleven months; and for a man to seduce a woman and have a son by her two years old in the short space of eleven months, must be acknowledged as a miracle in the annals of generation! Let us leave this miserable attempt to sully a truly generous deed, and convert it from a virtue to a vice, to go the way of all lies—to contempt first, and to oblivion after.

His arrival in Paris greatly annoyed the marquis, who did not approve of his appeal at all; and who thereupon cast him off entirely, declaring that he would not in any way mingle in his affairs further: that he should be left at liberty to go his own road; but that he should have no assistance, admonitory or monetary, from him.

But this parental disavowal did not daunt Mirabeau; although in the most straitened circumstances. He pursued his cause with such zeal, that the Marignane family became seriously alarmed, and resorted to all means, from denunciation to M. Lenoir, to private offers and persuasions, to silence him: but without effect.

[1784] Aware how immensely his reputation had gained by his Pontarlier and Aix Cases, he prepared another yet more eloquent; and early in February, commenced distributing them in Paris. The circulation had scarcely begun, when the directors of the printed-book department suppressed it. This led Mirabeau to demand an interview with M. de Miromesnil, the keeper of the seals; which was granted. Its end, however, was not in the least satisfactory; for, owing to the high commanding tone assumed by Mirabeau, they parted in passion. Mirabeau appealed to the king, but was unsuccessful; and therefore being in wrath, he slipped into Belgium, and there, in May, superintended the printing of his Case. It was published under the title of "*The Case of the Count of Mirabeau, suppressed, at the very eve of publication, by express command of the Keeper of the Seals, and reprinted from respect for the King and Justice, with a conversation between the Keeper of the Seals and the Count of Mirabeau upon this subject.*" (1 vol. 8vo.) He contrived on his return to Paris, to disseminate fifteen hundred copies surreptitiously: but it was in vain; for directly after his return, his appeal to the Court of Cassation was rejected.

His destinies at this period were low as they well could be. He was in such a state of abject poverty, that we find him applying to Chamfort, his friend and correspondent, for pecuniary aid; and that gentleman, not having cash, instructing him to

sell some wine of his, and make use of the proceeds!*

Nevertheless, poor and broken as he was, there were yet beings upon the earth, who deemed a life with him as heaven: during this short Paris sojourn, he added another to the long list of female hearts that fell before him. For, debauchee though he was, he had no love for *professional* ladies; and in all his amours there was a spirituality and kind of love, which much extenuate the crime.

Henrietta Amelia Van Haren, was the natural daughter of a Dutch politician and *literatteur.* She had just reached her nineteenth year, and was remarkably beautiful, amiable, and from all accounts —save her one ceremony - despising fault—faultless. She had been placed at a convent in Paris; whereat Mirabeau, by those mysterious means whereby the destined ones are brought together, became acquainted with her. The serene loveliness of the young maiden fell like a rainbowed heaven-ray upon the parched and weary heart of Mirabeau, and it straightway started into flame. The irresistible Orpheus - music of his love - declaring eloquence, rung in the ears of the lovely, blooming woman, as the notes of a *man,* and no charlatan or sham man; and the fair citadel of her virtue fell before it. Like all others who do wrong, she was more to be pitied than censured. She was but nineteen—ardent, susceptible—had not in this wide world one single relative or friend!

* Letters from England, vol. i. p. 3.

Scarcely had Mirabeau achieved this triumph, and before it had been consummated, ere it became apparent that France was no longer a safe residence for him; insomuch as that free spoken Case of his had excited the wrath of the Seal Keeper, and a prison-residence seemed more than probable. In this state of affairs, he determined upon flying to England; being led thither by an admiration of the people, and a design connected with English literature. Towards the close of July, matters having come to a crisis, he fled to the coast: Henrietta Van Haren, under the name of Madame Nehra, accompanying him. For the love of *him*, she flung fame, and world's opinion, and the shrieks of her tenacious sisters to the winds; and if, as she was, *she* was satisfied with her arrangements, is it our place, arrogantly moral, to condemn and reprehend her, now that she is at rest?

To all my fair readers who are inclined to curl their pure lips in scorn for this woman, and to despise her name, I would say:—remember that the ceremony is but the outward symbol of the inward heart's-union, and save as a symbol (and for civil ends) valueless; and that the inward union is the true one after all: remember, that she who merely resigns herself, much-loving to one man, and remains faithful to him, is far different to her who trades upon her body—and above all, that *the impurity and frail desires of the head and heart, are as sinful, God-wards, as those of the body.*

CHAPTER IV.

RESIDENCE IN ENGLAND.

1784—1785.

THE flight of Mirabeau and his fair comrade from Paris was excessively hasty: so much so, that half their effects were left behind, under charge of his valet. On their arrival at Dieppe, too impatient to wait for the regular packet, he hired one for himself; which landed him on English ground at Shoreham.

To us it is extremely pleasing to reflect, that Mirabeau, in that comet-like life of his, should have made our land his residence, even for only a little space: we have, therefore, by reading attentively all the contemporary biographies, endeavoured to collect some idea of his position here; and, as is ever the case with investigation, find that, as usual, history is altogether wrong, when she describes him as being received with contempt. The result is, that we are enabled to prove, from the company he kept, that his reception was not such as is generally represented; and, moreover, to give, for the first time, a more succinct and infinitely truer account thereof,

than the half-page which, in most histories and biographies, is devoted to this English residence of his.

From Shoreham he proceeded to Brighton; but finding that that place was expensive, retired for a day or two to Lewes, and thence proceeded to London by coach. "From this place (Lewes)," he writes to Chamfort, "to the metropolis, we passed through the finest county in Europe—prospects the most varied—verdure, in the real sense of the word —verdant and fruitful plains, each estate remarkable for its rural beauty—a most pleasing sight, a delight to the spirits, which one cannot exaggerate. The approaches to London are of an agricultural beauty, of which even Holland has not furnished me models —I would compare it rather to some vallies of Switzerland."*

Arriving in London, he took his residence in Hatton Garden, Holborn, at the house of one Mrs. Bailly. We do not find that this arrival caused the immense degree of disgust generally supposed: the only individual whose written word of screaming terror can be found, is one whose word will be well-nigh valueless in such a case—that of Mrs. Hannah More. On the contrary, we find him moving in the very best society; and, if a man is known by the company he keeps, then was Mirabeau at that period in better odour than party-writers would fain describe him to have been. His chief friend was Sir Samuel, then Mr. Romilly, with whom he was inseparably in-

* Lettres à Chamfort, 50.

timate;* by whose aid he amassed such a knowledge of British law and general jurisprudence, as rendered him an ardent advocate for the introduction of most of our systems into France. Wellnigh as intimate was he with Lord Peterborough, who had returned from France; and who, when Mirabeau had occasion at a trial for a witness of character, expressed his readiness, even in open court, to testify to the honour and probity of his friend. Mirabeau's character could, therefore, hardly be so very low at that period. The next was Sir Gilbert Elliott; who afterwards, having signalised himself in Hindoostan, became a peer under the title of Lord Minto. This gentleman, in open court, saved Lord Peterborough the trouble of testifying to Mirabeau's unimpeachable character, by saying:—

"I am sure every man thinks as I do, that he is a man of perfect honour; that there is nothing in his conduct reproachable."

These three were his every-day bosom-companions (and it was probably owing to their disinterested gift-loans that he continued to live at all); and when we know that in such society he moved, we are not surprised at finding that he came in contact with the fairest and wittiest notabilities of the day: and that he became intimate with Dr. Hurd, Bishop of Worcester (noteworthy from having only the year before

* This is the case; although Romilly, in after years, when the hatred of all revolutionists was at its height, endeavoured to make his intimacy cooller than it really was. He could not, however, in justice, refrain from saying, "*His ambition was of the noblest kind, and he proposed to himself the noblest ends.*"

declined the primacy); Major Cartwright, to whom a monumental brass was erected in Burton-crescent; the celebrated John Wilkes; Lord Shelbourne, afterwards first Marquis of Lansdowne, and several more. In fact, so far from Mirabeau having been repulsed, as has been usually stated, he seems to have been exceedingly warmly received, and his genius everywhere appreciated.

Perhaps the whole secret of the vituperative accounts of his English sojourn, so common here, have their origin in the fact, that it was the Liberal party who received him open-armed into their coteries: and any one acquainted with the height to which party animosity and untrue scurrility attained in those days, will understand that any account of Mirabeau proceeding from the then dominant faction is worthy of little or no credence. In these days, it is a sin that any malevolent assertion, promulgated by the narrow prejudice of a dead or dying party, should have place in an unbiassed and truth-telling history.

The only person with whom he corresponded regularly appears to have been Chamfort; whose relatives, early this century, published Mirabeau's letters: but, from the foolish wholesale admixture of documents of private no-interest with those of public world-interest, the book never attained to much popularity. Nevertheless, in many respects, it was well worthy of notice: for few remarks of Mirabeau's but are worth attention; and now and then in this collection, come

flashes of that almost prophetic insight into the future, which so greatly contributed to his latter triumph. And he is generally exceedingly lively, entertaining, and chatty; and his comments on our laws, habits, appearance, will ever repay the reader. One thing, too, this volume of letters displays to a surprising extent—his wide cosmopolitan learning and sentiment—how the great men and events of all nations are at home to him. He can quote with the same ease from Johnson, Dryden, Swift, Dante, Tasso, Camoens, as from Rousseau and Voltaire.

From this mass of remarks, we have endeavoured to select such as are likely to interest the English reader.

ON ENGLISH FEMALE BEAUTY.

"The kind of beauty you see in this country reminds me of a passage in Johnson, which I have several times attempted to translate:—'To expand,' he says, 'the human face to its full perfection, it seems necessary that the mind should co-operate, by the placidness and content of consciousness of superiority.' It seems, indeed, impossible to be so beautiful as an English woman, without habitually experiencing that calmness and composure of mind, which pre-suppose a thorough independence, an exemption from sorrow and need, self-command, exaltation of spirit, and strength of character. I cannot, however, avoid observing that English beauty possesses more brilliancy than attraction. At a distance you notice the dazzling whiteness, but on a nearer approach,

you desire more vivacity, more animation. In the blood which circulates in those tender and delicate veins, there is more serenity than voluptuousness, more tenderness than love."

[Had Mirabeau been led so to judge from the beautiful conception to whom he is made acquainted, by the brilliant and fascinating authoress of "Zoe"?]

ON THE STATE OF FRANCE.

"I think Louis XV. was well nigh correct, when he stated, that the monarchy would endure his time, and not much longer. Unless some very decisive change take place—*which I shall endeavour to bring about by writing, and in every other practicable manner*—Louis XVI. will be the last monarch who will sway the fate of France."

[This short sentence is most noteworthy. It proves the depth to which the eye of Mirabeau could pierce: for what individual had then the least glimmering of such a thing save he; and it also proves that even then Mirabeau entertained the same idea of saving the monarchy, which, as developed later on, charity ascribes to venality and bribes: as if a bribe *could* buy a soul like his!]

"Should a revolution or civil war break out in France, I tremble for the aristocratic portion of the realm; their châteaux will be reduced to ashes, and their blood shed in torrents."

[A prophet! a very prophet!]

ON THE ENGLISH MODE OF GREETING.

"To seize a man by the arm, and shake it till his shoulder is almost dislocated, is one of the great testimonies of friendship, which the English give each other when they chance to meet. This they do most calmly. There is no expression of friendship in their faces, but the whole soul enters into the arm that gives the shake."

A PORTRAIT OF A METHODIST PARSON.

"The methodist church consists almost wholly of tradesmen and persons of the lower classes. The preacher wears black gloves and a white handkerchief; and during his sermon, sighs and groans with the manner and voice of a fanatic. The discourse of the man I attended was frequently broken by cries of 'Oh!' &c. &c., repeated every minute. Hell is the pet subject with these ministers; whose religious fury contributes, above a little, to fill Bedlam, which lies closely contiguous to one of their conventicles."

ON THE POWER OF THE KING IN ENGLAND.

"In general acts, the regal power seems boundless; in individual cases, as limited as any in Europe. Thus it would be easier for him to destroy the liberty of the press at one blow, or to load the entire coun-

try with an enormous impost, than to take a simple cottage from its rightful owner. The king can raise twenty millions of money, but he cannot cu off the head of John Wilkes."

ON THE PALTRY PRIDE OF BIRTH OF THE ENGLISH NOBILITY.

"I consider merit as the only rational founder of a family, and therefore regard with contempt the absurd pretences to family so general in this land. The first of a noble house should be a man whose fame immortalizes him, without any addition which princes can bestow: from such men all ought to be, and are proud of descending, whether they flourished yesterday, or ten years agone. The immortality which transcendant merit or great genius gives is higher than all nobility. *The names of Bacon, Shakespeare, Milton, and Newton, will increase in splendour, when the whole House of Lords, their ancestors, and descendants, are buried in oblivion.* Long after all the traces of family pedigrees, descents, and all the humbug of heraldry, are ended, their names will go down to distant and enlightened ages, and be pronounced with delight by every tongue!"

Let us conclude these disconnected excerpts, by one short but remarkable sentence; wherein some

glimmering of his future career seems to have been dawning in his mind. It is as follows:—

"My next letter shall give you briefly my ideas about church pastors, tithes, and ecclesiastical property; *which, by-the-bye, I must at another time extend into a book, or a speech: for who knows whether I may not yet be an orator one day!*"

Short as was the period of his sojourn in England, Mirabeau did not confine himself to London, but visited nearly every celebrated place in the vicinity of the metropolis; remarking upon them, with his usual point and felicity, in his letters to Chamfort. With Chiswick, and its magnificent collection of paintings, he appears to have been particularly delighted; and, as he added connoisseurship in pictures to his other numerous acquirements, his remarks thereon are by no means valueless. He also devotes several letters to the consideration of the probabilities of a British school of painting; wherein his natural gift of insight is very predominant. And his admiration of Sir Joshua Reynolds does credit to his discernment.

In the course of July he took a more extended trip, in company with Sir George Elliott. They departed first for Windsor, where they stayed two days. With the celebrated terrace-view, Mirabeau expressed himself disappointed; though he acknowledged that "The prospect from it is the richest

and most expanded I have ever seen!" There also he was introduced to the venerable Herschel, who had just then discovered the *Georgium Sidus;* and with whose genius and courtesy Mirabeau was greatly delighted.

From Windsor they proceeded to Oxford: which was, in fact, the object of their journey. With this elegant "city of palaces" he seems to have been quite captivated; but even more so with the literati to whom he was introduced: in particular, with one Dr. Brown, the head of one of the colleges; whose enlightened cosmopolitan views, and anxiety to connect the French and English nations more closely, won for him the esteem of the generous and catholic mind of Mirabeau.

Early in the following year he had an opportunity of testing the English mode of law proceedings; having, on the 10th of January, had the honour and pleasure of standing the cross-questioning of an English counsel, and awaiting the award of an English jury, at the Old Bailey.

This was in a case of theft. We mentioned that Mirabeau, in his hurry to leave Paris, had left a large proportion of his effects in the keeping of his valet: this man, by name Hardi, also acted as secretary. Almost directly after Hardi's arrival in London, several articles of the count's wearing apparel were missing; and they having been traced to M. Hardi's trunk (where he had placed them by mistake!), he was discharged. But when the boxes he had packed

in Paris arrived, it was found that a manuscript, highly important to him, and several other documents were missing; and so, upon the advice of Sir Gilbert Elliot, Hardi was hunted out and arrested on charge of theft.

On the 10th of January, the case was tried before Mr. Justice Buller. Mr. Garrow, (afterwards Sir William Garrow, and attorney-general), was Mirabeau's counsel, with Mr. Fielding, a relative of the Tom Jones Fielding; and Mr. Sylvester (afterwards Sir John Sylvester, and of evil repute in the Newgate precincts for brutality), for the prisoner. The delicate and beautiful Madame de Nehra sustained, as our report of the trial tells us, an hour's cross-examination; characterised by that refined and gentlemanly manner with which members of the bar occasionally treat ladies (somewhat as a tipsy rake treats a *bar*-maid)! and after her, the Count himself had to endure another similar infliction. But Mirabeau was too many for them: when the dexterous counsel, with his long train of interrogations, running swiftly one into the other, asked a question, Mirabeau favoured him always with a small oration; so that the question itself was forgotten, and its point lost. This mode he proceeded with, until the exasperated and disconcerted Mr. Sylvester cried peevishly, "It is very unfortunate that this gentleman, the Count, will make a speech on every question we ask him; *by which means our questions lose their effect.*" And finally, like the redoubtable

Mr. Weller, he retired from the witness-box, conscious of having outwitted the barristers. Nevertheless, the prisoner was acquitted. But, owing to some ungentlemanly imputation flung out by the prisoner's counsel, the court, in returning its verdict of Not Guilty, saw fit to address his friend Elliot—who, as we mentioned, had borne testimony in the court to Mirabeau's high character—thus, "Sir Gilbert, you will take the trouble to tell the Count from the court, *that there is nothing has dropt that throws the slightest imputation upon him: he has acted very wisely, and his honour is not in the least impeached by anything that has occurred in this prosecution.*"

But above prosecutions, and Oxford trips, and delightful society, the great fact of living glared in upon him rather harshly. He was wholly without resources, and had come to England to subsist by his pen. To subsist by *that* is a difficult matter for an Englishman; but for a foreigner writing in his own language, how much more so: therefore, we are not surprised to find that Mirabeau succeeded but indifferently.

His first work appeared in September 1784, about a month after his arrival in London. It was published by a J. Johnson, under the title of "*Considerations upon the Order of Cincinnatus, or an Imitation of an Anglo-American Pamphlet; by the Count of Mirabeau.*" (London: 8vo. pp. 384.) Although this bore Mirabeau's name, it was little else than a free translation of a work by Dr. Price, of the same

title; save that here and there flashed a light-beam, betokening the hand of a master. He had commenced this at Paris, at the personal and particular request of Franklin, with whom he was intimate; he completed it immediately on his arrival here, and from what can be gleaned from the Chamfort letters, its reception was even beyond his anticipation.*

This was followed at the close of September 1784, by another volume, entirely original this time, and called "*Doubts upon the Liberty of the Escaut, claimed by the Emperor, upon the causes and the probable consequences of that claim, by the Count of Mirabeau.*" (London, 8vo. pp. 208.)

The Dutch possessed the right, strictly exclusive, of navigating the mouth of the Scheldt, or Escaut; no vessel being allowed to sail into the Netherlands by that river, or from them to the sea. The Emperor, Joseph II., anxious to carry out the designs of his mother, Maria Theresa, for making the Netherlands commercial rivals to Holland, determined to abolish this monopoly; and, strange to say, Mirabeau's pen defended its continuance. Being a thorough free-trader and anti-monopolist, this appears singular:

* As all remembrance of the Order of Cincinnatus is wearing away, it may be as well to say, that, on Washington retiring, Cincinnatus-like, from the Presidency, a host of his admirers, forgetting the republic in their zeal for the man, established a kind of association under that name, having medals, ribbons, &c.; and as this was a species of knighthood, and so paved the way to an American aristocracy, Mirabeau's tract was written to warn them of their dangerous error.

nevertheless, he had cogent reasons for the side he took. Beside the all-cogent reason of want of bread, well nigh, he considered the affair more in the light of a despotic monarch plundering a weaker republic of a privilege bought by the blood of thousands of its sons; and, therefore, sacrificing his love of commercial freedom to his hatred of political despotism, he advocated ably and manfully the cause of the Scheldt monopoly.

For a young clergyman Mirabeau composed a discourse on the immortality of the soul; which we are informed is very sublime. The Fils Adoptif in 1836 promised to publish this and other unpublished productions of his adopter; but has not hitherto done so. He also composed an admirable vindication of the Jews; claiming for them full civil and political rights. We think it no despicable proof of Mirabeau's wide liberality and enlightenment, that he in 1785 should have advocated energetically, what we, sixty-three years later, are just discovering to be just and proper. This defence was wrung from Mirabeau by the exquisitely dignified reply of the venerable Mendelssohn to Lavater. M. Bonnet, having written a vindication of Christianity, Lavater saw fit to translate it, and in an enthusiasm of partisanship dedicated it to Moses Mendelssohn; calling upon him, either to confute the book, or else change his belief. To this Mendelssohn gave a meek and kind reply, proving clearly that he was more of the Christian than the loud-vaunting Lavater. This response coming under

Mirabeau's eye, had introduced him to the works of its author; and being excited to a pitch of enthusiastic admiration, he issued his indignant protest against the treatment of Jews in all ages and nations: his loud demand for equality, toleration, and justice.

Beside all these, being necessitated to write, he prepared a scheme for a voluminous work to be called "The Conservator," which was, as far as the prospectus teaches, to comprise a succinct and elaborate abridgment of everything that man had ever written: a kind of compendium of natural history, poetry, medicine, astronomy, belles-lettres, philosophy, and endless other polite sciences! At first, the London publishers looked kindly on this design, but as it unfolded itself, and grew day by day more enlarged, they regarded it less favourably; and finally, when the immense labour was about to be commenced upon, declined it altogether.

It had by this time grown remarkably manifest to Mirabeau, that to support himself for any length of time in London by writing French works, was totally impracticable. In February, therefore, having heard that the ministerial wrath was somewhat cooled, he despatched Madame de Nehra to Paris, to see how the wind blew, and report progress. Instead of finding that her—*husband,* shall we call him?—was in better repute, she discovered that he was in worse favour than ever. It had been represented to the ministry that he was preparing works in England against them, to be smuggled into circula-

tion in France, like his former case: they had even gone to the length of employing spies in England to note his movements. * Of these things he was duly admonished by Madame de Nehra; and therefore delayed his departure. But everything tended to increase his desire for a speedy return: he was without pecuniary resources; his literary efforts were totally abortive in England; and therefore that worse want of all for Mirabeau, (far worse than the want of food or money to him) the want of active, energetic employment harassed him night and day. Moreover, the sharer of his life-lot was parted from him, and that invisible heart-attraction we name love, drew him Pariswards. Therefore, after waiting a month, for better tidings, he determined to put into practice his unlimited fund of daring, and return at all risks. At the close of March he bade a kind and loving adieu to England and the English: having resided there eight months. In poverty and sorrow, with embarrassment and doubt blackening the dull horizon of the future, he turned him to his own land; uncertain of all things, save that, come what might, he was a man, and would live as such.

* Letters from England, vol. i. 61.

CHAPTER V.

PARIS—CALONNE AND STOCK-JOBBING.

1785.

WITH Mirabeau, as with every other great man, peace, and not strife, was, at bottom, the characteristic of his nature. This may seem strange, but is not so. The battle he enacted was forced upon him by hard necessity, and not by will. When at the early age of twenty-three he married, it was with the firm intention of settling down to a calm life of philanthropic rest-activity, and, be-murmured by rural brooks and serenaded by the everlasting night-and-day music of the birds, to forget in dear seclusion the huge folly, fret, and hubbub of political and public life: and now, when he retraced his steps to France from his English sojournment, what were his ideas—his designs? To retire at once with his sweet wife-sister Madame de Nehra, and their adopted son, to Mirabeau Castle, and there spend the remainder of his days, in a steady routine of

study; composing carefully, and by slow and laboured efforts, a historic work which should perpetuate his name.* This was far from being the design of an inordinate wholesale debauchee, (whose licentious desires would naturally lead him to some large woman-peopled city, rather than a lonely château), and of a mighty aspirant for man-rule, and demagogue celebrity, whose thirst for applause and greed or government nothing could satiate. And yet, with customary indifference to facts, so has his character been pourtrayed; by men who, seeing nothing in that transcendant Revolution of 1790 save an aggravated street-riot, lavish wholesale abuse on any man who dared to oppose an infatuated court, and a weak and unkingly monarch.

This design of retreating to Mirabeau was, however, frustrated by an unforeseen accident. The adopted son, who bore the familiar name of Coco, then in his fifth year, was suddenly seized with an aggravated disease, threatening his life. To nurse this youth into a fit state for travelling, Mirabeau and Madame de Nehra had to delay their expedition to Provence for a few weeks; and in this interval, he hunted up and revived nearly all his former friends. These were numerous; for, notwithstanding the fear entertained of him as a monster of unscrupulous immorality, his fascinating powers of conversation, and gigantic genius, commanded an admiration the very admirers would fain have withheld.

* Fils Adop. iv. 179.

Among the number of these was Clavière, the Genevese refugee; whom we mentioned as having been driven, with several others, from his native city by aristocratic persecution, and who had taken refuge in Paris. Through him, Mirabeau became intimate with Panchaud, another Genevese, and a considerable banker and money-dealer in Paris. As an occupation—and partly because the immense question of finance, having dispelled Turgot and Necker from the premiership in quick succession, was growing a topic of absorbing interest—Mirabeau devoted his leisure, and the unflagging industry he so pre-eminently possessed, to the arduous and intricate study of monetary affairs.

Into the confused vortex of finance—with its discounts, consols, three, four, five, or haply six per cents., shares, quarters, fifths, and such like—let no man imagine we are about suicidally to plunge. As, however, these labours of Mirabeau extended, if not his popularity, certainly his name and fame as an eloquent and powerful writer, they demand some adequate notice from one endeavouring to be his biographer.

The French nation never were—and perhaps owing to an inherent excitability of character which precludes the steady patient thrift of a merchant's life—never will be much of a commercial people; consequently they ever have been, as far as their resources went, the victims of those chimerical projects for amassing instantaneous fortunes, which the human faculty for

swindling has always been busied in inventing. Ever since the death of Louis XV., the revenue of France had been in a deplorable state: an annual deficit, increasing, of course, and swelling to a terrible bankruptcy-threatening amount, had led Necker, and after him Calonne, to have recourse to immense loans; and, as these paid a good interest, and the faith in the throne and nation was unlimited, and the passion for undue interest even more so, these loans became quite the rage in France, and every body sought to invest their superfluous capital in some good interest-bearing quarter.

To such an extent did this monomania spread, that private banks, on the loan principle, began to be established: of these, the most celebrated was the Bank of Discount, established by Turgot in 1776. This, for some years after its establishment, had no pernicious effect: in fact, rather the contrary; but chancing one year to pay an unlooked-for dividend, the shares rose to an immense height, and having fallen almost entirely into the hands of speculators, were, at the time Mirabeau arrived at Paris, at a considerable premium and much demand; when, had they been rated according to their intrinsic value, they should have rather been at a discount.

Next to this in importance, (measured of course by the undue price and ridiculous demand for shares), was a Spanish bank at Madrid, designated the bank of St. Charles. For the utter insanity with which the shares of this bank were run after in

France, the reader will have to turn to the celebrated South Sea bubble to find a parallel. The bank of St. Charles was, more strictly speaking, a company; its ultimate object and only chance of remuneration being based upon extraordinary, and as it proved, suppositious gains, arising from trading with the Philippine Islands. Had the Spanish nation alone been duped by this bank, it would not have perhaps been surprising, seeing that it was a national bank; but for the French people to be such enthusiastic patrons, and such extensive victims of this delusion as they were, seems to an English mercantile eye, almost unbelievable. To give some idea of the strange height to which this mania had spread, it will be sufficient to state, that, instead of the price of the shares being regulated at Madrid, where the bank was *bonâ fide* established, the Madrid speculators took their price from Paris, where there was but an agent and branch bank.

The only one at all approaching these was the Water Company of Paris: this was established with a view to supplying the metropolis with that necessity to life; and the only objectionable thing relating to it was, that, like the Bank of Discount, the shares were at a preposterous altitude, owing to the contrivances of the money-dealers.

"The hunter-down of humbug," as Mirabeau designates himself,—no sooner did it become apparent to him, from his financial studies, how totally rotten these things were—how calculated to drain the

pockets of ignorant, honest men, for the sole advantage of cunning quacks—than he determined to blaze down upon them in red hot fury, and, if possible, burn them, by so doing, into nothing. Accordingly, towards the close of April, he commenced a treatise upon the Bank of Discount.

Calonne having entered into office on the retreat of Necker, with only one hundred pounds, had managed to carry on till then, by commencing a series of expensive undertakings: and by acting as though he had unlimited supplies, contrived to extort considerable loans from the capitalists: but now the great fact that Necker's deficit was swollen to a fearful amount, began to become generally known; and the monied parties grew chary of lending, where it seemed more than likely that a return would be distant and the interest doubtful. In such a state, in proportion as the government loans fell in the popular opinion, those of the joint-stock banks rose; any publication, therefore, likely to bring the Bank of Discount into discredit, was interesting, and would of course prove advantageous, to Calonne. Having heard of Mirabeau's intended publication, he expressed such interest therein, that an interview took place between them; and the minister looked over, and his hints had great influence in the formation of, his two first productions.

But Mirabeau was too independent to be guided solely by any man, whether minister or not; and feeling convinced that Calonne, in some of his early

edicts, had added materially to the mania, he expressed himself freely upon his measure in one of his chapters: so freely that, though his intercourse with Calonne was not interrupted, the timidity of the Paris printers was such, that a trip across the frontiers became necessary for its publication.

With his fair friend he therefore departed to Bouillon, in Luxemburgh. Hence in quick succession came forth upon the nation, first, "*On the Bank of Discount*," (8vo. pp. 227), secondly, "*On the Bank of Spain, called of St. Charles*," (8vo. 320). After the issue whereof he returned to Paris, about the middle of May.

The effect of these fiery and vigorous pamphlet-books was electric. The shares of the Discount Bank sustained a material decrease, and those of the Bank of St. Charles fell in one week from forty pounds to eighteen. As was only natural, from the exasperated stock-jobbers, whose ill-gotten gains were thus in danger of being torn away, arose the fiercest denunciations against the offender. His private character was maligned, his present state misrepresented: in fact, no story, however disgusting and improbable, but found ready credence among, and extensive publicity through, these disappointed money-mongers. As usual, the man could do no one good manly act of his own free volition, but must needs be bribed to all this by Calonne! As if, had Calonne paid for a book, he would not

have seen that in it, at the least, one of his own pet-measures was not censured!

The impetus having been given, away went Mirabeau headlong at the task: on the 13th of July appeared another volume, entitled "*A Letter from the Count of Mirabeau to M. le Couteulx de la Noraye, on the Bank of Spain, called, of St. Charles, and on the Bank of Discount,*" (8vo. pp. 117). This M. de la Noraye, was the agent of the Bank in Paris; and this letter, was but a recapitulation of his two former works, in stronger, briefer, and forcibler language.

Immediately after the appearance of this letter, Mirabeau experienced the well-known perfidiousness of ministers; by Calonne's disavowing, virtually if not actually, his connection with these compositions. To poor Calonne, after having dexterously managed to raise the wind, without taxing the nobility and clergy, and so earning the title of the "model minister" from the ladies of the court, it became apparent that ere long this Elysian dream must vanish, unless by some necromantic effort he could procure additional supplies. He found himself therefore necessitated to court the very men whom Mirabeau, under his patronage, had attacked; and to pacify these, sacrificed Mirabeau. On the 13th of July, a decree of Council suppressed the work on the Bank of St. Charles; and on the 24th of August, a similar decree performed the same favour to the letter to M. de la Noraye. The suppression of the latter was the most annoying; seeing that the proof

sheets had been read by the minister himself, and his alterations agreed to.*

Nothing daunted, however, by such treatment, Mirabeau turned his attention to the third cesspool in this monied Augean stable; and on the 2nd of October issued another fulmination, by name, "*On the Shares of the Water-Company of Paris,*" (8vo. pp. 36,) printed in London. Calonne now deemed it necessary to put a stop to the very torrent to which he had opened the floodgates; and, there being rumours afloat, that this pamphlet came from the pen of Clavière himself, the lieutenant of police called upon that gentleman to announce his majesty's displeasure at the publication, and to *advise* him not to repeat the experiment. This was an insult: a twofold insult. It was an insult to impute to Mirabeau the meanness of putting his name to a work written by another (and in which, by the way, Mirabeau's own peculiar style is easy to be traced); and it was an insult to attempt to frighten a quondam ally, by the bullying of a police-agent.

With a juggling trickster, like this Calonne, no terms could be kept: with a man acting an open deceit in such a manner, open war was, perhaps, the best. But before declaring war, common prudence suggested an evacuation of the enemy's territories; and so, Mirabeau, with his *dame de compagnie*, departed in November for Belgium; determining, so soon as he should be well across the marshes, to

* Fils Adop. iv. 186.

inflict such a castigation on the minister, as minister rarely had been honoured by receiving. This he did actually execute in a tremendous denunciation, to the length of three hundred octavo pages, if printed: but, having placed the manuscript, without reserving a copy, into the hands of his friend Talleyrand (afterwards bishop and prince,) and others; these, foreseeing the danger attending such an intemperate publication, refused to return the document, or publish it; and so it now exists in manuscript, unpublished, and his vengeance had to go unsatisfied.

In the mean time the Water-Company had not remained inactive. Anxious to dispel the unfavourable impression Mirabeau's book had raised, they hired Beaumarchais, afterwards so celebrated for his "Figaro," &c., to reply to him. This Beaumarchais accomplished, in a highly satisfactory manner; for he opposed to Mirabeau's vehement, declamatory style, the thinnest and most subtile sarcasm, mingled with ironic praise, the venom whereof could not fail to sting bitterly: for if, as the great one of this century says, "Sarcasm is, for the most part, the language of the devil," what is that double-distilled quintessence of sarcasm—irony?

This witty reply goaded Mirabeau to a species of frenzy: in blustering fury he signified his intention of prosecuting Beaumarchais, and called upon the company to discover their defender, lest, in his overwhelming indignation, he snuffed them out too! Being

only laughed at by them, and being induced to leave France for the reason we have seen, he bore away his rage, none the cooler for being as yet unexpressed; and when he reached Brussels, levelled at them his "*Reply to the Writer for the Directors of the Water Company of Paris.*" (8vo. pp. 116): a mixture of scornful passion, vulgar personality, and eloquent abuse.

If a man loses his argument when he loses his temper, beyond all doubt, as far as Beaumarchais was concerned, Mirabeau lost this. How, then: was Beaumarchais greater than he? Not so. What said the sturdy literature-king of last century on a similar quarrel in our land? "A small fly," he said (we quote from memory) "may sting a great horse, and give him much pain; but the fly is still a despicable insect, and the horse is the horse after all!"

CHAPTER VI.

BERLIN — FREDERICK THE GREAT — RETURN TO PARIS — BERLIN AGAIN — PARIS.

1785—1786.

WHEN Mirabeau, at the close of 1785, left Paris, he did so for two reasons: first, he panted to take a signal revenge upon Calonne, in which he was frustrated by the prudence of his friends; secondly, to seek in a foreign court some employment or connection, yielding enough, with the aid of his pen, to support him in comfort. He had not, however, any fixed idea, as to the probable place whereat he should settle. Madame de Nehra has written an interesting narrative of this trip; which, as the following sample may demonstrate, is not without dramatic interest.

"We left on the 23rd of December: it was very cold, but the seasons never stayed us. Between Toul and Verdun we ran into great danger. Were they assassins? We know not; but they were certainly not robbers. I will make no comments on

the event; I will merely relate it. It was eleven at night, and, despite the snow, the windows of the coach were open; all the carriage slept except myself. All at once a pistol was discharged into the coach, then going at a great rate upon the pathway. I made a motion to awake the count, saying to him, 'My friend, they are firing at us!' At the same time two more were discharged nearly simultaneously. One ball passed, and made an indentation in the carriage, and fell. Without doubt the motion I made, and that of M. de Mirabeau in awaking, saved us both from being wounded. Certainly they were not robbers; nor were they experienced assassins. The postillion took the sensiblest part; which was, without informing himself whether we were wounded or not, to go at all speed to the nearest post."*

Leaving this strange incident to be unriddled by the speculative, let us follow Mirabeau. From Verdun they proceeded to Nancy, and thence to Frankfort on the Maine; thence to Leipsig. At all these cities he made some short stay, and became acquainted with the chief literati of the place: more especially of the latter city, whereat he passed some time in the society of the numerous literary men with whom that town abounded. Finally, as his ultimatum, he proceeded to Berlin.

The reason for their selection of Berlin was obvious. Frederick the Great, reigning King of

* Fils Adop. iv. 287.

Prussia, and residing at Potsdam in the vicinity of Berlin, was the most wonderful man of his age. A king of only a quondam electorate, he had for long defied Maria Theresa and the House of Austria; wresting from them their province of Silesia: he had added two millions of taxable subjects to his crown, amassed much treasure, and had the largest and most disciplined army in Europe.* Himself an author, he was a zealous patron of literary men; and had, moreover, a partiality for the French. Being then seventy-four, the eyes of the world were upon him, as upon the setting of an unclouded sun.

These were quite sufficient to attract Mirabeau to his court; and so, on the 19th of January, he reached Berlin. As the old king received no foreigners, he was presented to the royal family merely; but wrote a letter to the king announcing formally his arrival, and, to the surprise of the whole court, received a speedy reply from Frederick, appointing a day for an interview. This interview took place on the 25th of January; causing much envy among the French of the court, whom Fritz had not thought fit so to honour. It would appear that the king had inquired into Mirabeau's projects, who the day after addressed the following letter to him:—

"SIRE,

"I should fear much more to appear to be guilty of a want of confidence in your majesty, than to

* Coxe's History of the House of Austria, vol. iii. 508.

commit an indiscretion which could only militate against myself.

"When your majesty did me the honour to inquire yesterday whether I were going to St. Petersburg, I replied that it was not my intention to go thither yet. I had one or two witnesses, and my personal circumstances demand that my proceedings be not noised abroad.

"Now that I am speaking to your majesty alone, I shall have the honour to tell you that, badly recompensed as are my really great services to France in the financial department—compromised in safety, and nearly in reputation, by the minister himself, because I would not mix myself with his last loan, nor sanction his monetary schemes—obliged to seek, while my father lives, employment for my natural activity, and for my feeble talent—goaded by the desire, unreasonable perhaps, of making myself regretted in France, I have quitted it with the permission of the sovereign; but with the intention of never re-entering it, so long as I am young and capable of active employment, save to gather the considerable heritage my father will leave me.

"Next to the just curiosity which has led me to Berlin—and where I shall probably wait for my brother, who is about to ask your majesty's permission to instruct himself in military tactics—my intention is, I avow it to yourself alone, to seek employment in that country where I know foreigners are most needed. I shall press forward to Russia;

and, assuredly, I should never seek that birth-struggling nation, that savage country, did it not appear to me that your government is too completely organized for me to flatter myself I could be useful to your majesty. To serve you, and not sit easily in the academies, had, without doubt, been the first of my ambitions, sire. But the storms of my early youth, and the deceptions of my country, have long turned my ideas from this beautiful design, and I fear that it is now quite too late. Deign to receive, sire, the revelation I felt myself constrained to make. I owed it you, because your majesty has shown some curiosity about my destination; but I am bold enough to supplicate you to keep my secret."

The brave old king could apparently discern the substratum of unlimited genius in Mirabeau's then very questionable shape; else why this marked attention—this interest in his future proceedings. Two days after, he forwarded the following kind reply:—

"MONSIEUR THE COUNT OF MIRABEAU.

"I CANNOT but be very sensible of the confidence you place in me, in your letter of the 26th, by declaring the reasons which have compelled you to expatriate yourself, with the permission of your sovereign, and travel in a foreign country, to employ your talents with more success. You may be sure that I shall keep your secret, and I shall ever interest myself in the fate of a man of your merit; wishing,

with my whole heart, it may be of the most favourable, and in unison with your wishes.

"For the rest, it will depend entirely upon yourself to remain at Berlin, until the arrival of your brother, who desires to ask permission to practise tactics. This project gives me the greater pleasure, as I hope to see you a couple of times in that interval, to assure you of all my sentiments by word of mouth. In the meantime, I pray God that he will keep you, M. the Count of Mirabeau, in His holy and illustrious keeping."*

"FREDERICK.

"*Potsdam, Jan. 28th,* 1786."

During this flying Berlin visit of his, Mirabeau found time to demonstrate his faculty of hero-detecting and quack-detecting. His very visit to Berlin was a tribute to the active-heroic in the person of Frederick; and he paid homage to the scientific, by acknowledging the genius of the illustrious La Grange, and forming an intimate acquaintance with him. Impelled by necessity, and his unconquerable aversion to humbug in any shape, he flung off, at the same time, a passing anathema on that high-priest of charlatans, Cagliostro. It was published on the 25th of March, and was entitled, "*Letters of the Count of Mirabeau to M* * * *, upon Cagliostro and Lavater*" (Berlin, 8vo, pp. 75.) This brochure chiefly con-

* Fils Adop. ii. 292. Only one of these interviews occurred, owing to his sudden recall to Paris.

sists of an examination and exposure of the professed miracles performed in various places by the former swindler, and a censure, and also disclosure, of the extreme superstition of the fanatic, yet well-meaning Lavater; who, as our readers will all know, was a minister and celebrated physiognomist at Zurich. Mirabeau had crossed him before, in his work on the Jews and Moses Mendelssohn, written in London, and prepared for the press during this sojourn in Berlin. It was published in London shortly after. Richardt, a musician, Brissot de Warville, afterwards a revolutionist, and the landgrave of Hesse-Homburg, anonymously entered the lists to tilt in behalf of the illuminati: to do battle for Rosa Crucia. To all these Mirabeau replied: to the first, vehemently; to the latter twain, temperately; and posterity has emphatically declared on which side was the victory, by stigmatizing Cagliostro as the supreme impostor of his day, with no dissenting voice.

He had also planned a design for a journal, and wrote numerous essays with that idea; but it never came to anything.

He had only been four months in Prussia when circumstances called him to Paris. It appears that, previous to his leaving that city, he had commenced a demand—through a private medium—for the payment of the pension settled upon him by the marquis, and since the Aix trials refused payment by him. Of the progress, good or bad, of this demand, Mira-

beau could gain no tidings; and that sternest of reminders, want, causing him to be anxious about its success, he determined, about the middle of April, to leave Madame de Nehra and the adopted son at Berlin, and slip down to Paris; to mark the signs of the times, private-economic, and public-political. Previous to departing, he deemed it his duty to inform the king, and received the following courteous reply:—

"M. THE COUNT OF MIRABEAU.

"As unforeseen circumstances, as I see by your letter of the 14th of this month, require your prompt return to France; do me the pleasure, in case you take the road through here, to let me know your arrival in this town. Accept, meanwhile, my thanks for all the polite things you say to me, and be assured, &c.,

"FREDERICK.

"*Potsdam, April* 15*th*, 1786."

Potsdam being in the direct route, this interview took place on the 19th of April; and, as everything connected with the Great Fritz is interesting, we shall* be excused quoting Mirabeau's account of it in full. It is written to Madame de Nehra, and runs as follows:—

"I have been an hour, all but a few minutes, with the king, who was in his arm-chair; the morning exer-

* Fils Adop. iv. 296.

cise having fatigued him. It is impossible to imagine a head more fresh, a conversation more amiable: but I was not at my ease. The extreme difficulty of his breathing oppressed me more than him. It is a very melting spectacle, that of a great man suffering! The nature of his disease is such, and my emotion was so strong, that I feared a crisis, and avoided almost superstitiously whatever might prolong a conversation which would have given me pleasure at any other time. You comprehend this feeling, and it little imports to me that many should comprehend it; for the rest, this extraordinary man will reign to the end, and the sun will retard that end."

Examine this picture of the old asthmatic monarch of seventy, finding it difficult to respire at all, and compare it with the strong man of thirty years previous, at the battle of Colin, sword in hand, chasing back some runaway recreants to the conflict, saying, with a loud imprecation, "Would ye live for ever?" (*Volt ihr ewig leben*); and then think how the strongest and bravest fade like shadows—how we are at best but as foolish fire-crackers, which splutter and phiz a few moments, and then, ceasing abruptly, leave no vestige save an empty case.

From Potsdam, Mirabeau proceeded to Brunswick, in order to have an interview with his old and intimate friend, M. Mauvillion, a major in the engineers. This was to arrange matters for the collection of materials for an elaborate survey, statistic and historic, of the kingdom of Prussia; which col-

lection the major was to undertake, leaving the classification and actual composition of the book to Mirabeau. He stayed a few days at Brunswick, and presented himself at court: he was disappointed in not seeing the duke, who was absent; but was nevertheless received with marked favour, owing to Frederick having written an eulogistic letter concerning him.

From thence he pushed on swiftly to Paris, arriving on the 22d of May. Popular feeling was then at the utmost pitch of excitement, owing to the trial of the Prince Cardinal de Rohan, for the celebrated Diamond Necklace affair; and this topic seems to have engrossed his whole attention, as it is the burden of all his letters. Without siding with the insane partizanship wherewith the populace allied themselves to the culprits, Mirabeau considered the conduct of the court as extremely impolitic; justly arguing that the royal name and court influence should never be staked upon a trial whereof the issue was so exceedingly doubtful. His picture of the acquittal and release of these prisoners is so graphic, and the concluding sentence so prophetic and far-seeing, that it must find a place here.

"At ten o'clock," he says (May 31st), "the pure and free discharge was announced; the people inundated the streets contiguous to the palace, and all the halls, from five in the morning. I know not where the parliament would have fled had they decided wrongly. The people stopped them, caressed,

kissed; five hundred persons bowed themselves—it was a delirium. In fact, although such was not the motive, the peril so rashly incurred by the passions of those masters who ought to have no passions, or who at least should conquer or conceal them—*might not that peril, increased by the ministers, become one also for the nation itself?*"

The fortunes of Mirabeau were never at a lower ebb than during the first week or two of his residence in Paris: the object of his visit, to obtain his patrimonial allowance, had not yet succeeded, and he was utterly without resources, when fortune, who ever at the hour of necessity helps the noble and brave, threw a means of living into his way; neither very lucrative nor very honourable: but imperative necessity has no conscientious scruples, and it was accepted. This was a secret mission to Berlin.

Frederick the Great, as we have seen, was "like a bright scintillation in the evening," fading fleetly from this world; and as his nephew and successor, Frederick-William, preferring a stupid originality to a brilliant adoption of his uncle's masterly schemes, was currently reported to entertain opinions and sentiments likely to endanger the peace of Europe, or at any rate make a material alteration in the existing alliances, it was therefore obviously advisable that some confidential agent, who possessed the faculty of clear discernment, should be employed at Berlin, until the death of Frederick and the consolidation of the government of Frederick-William.

Talleyrand, the Duke of Lauzun, and one or two more friends of Mirabeau (the men who had so judiciously suppressed his invective against Calonne), being intimate and having influence with the ministers, suggested Mirabeau to M. Vergennes, the foreign minister, and to Calonne; these, well aware that he was the very man, listened to their suggestion, and as a kind of testimony of qualification, demanded from Mirabeau a survey of the political aspect of the times. This was no sooner asked than it was supplied: on the 22d of May he reached Paris; on the 2d of June he forwarded to the government a treatise "*On the actual State of Europe.*" This paper is merely a plain statement of the condition of the courts and dynasties of Europe, with deductions and speculations upon their probable conduct.

This carried conviction with it: on the 3d of July he departed once again to Prussia, armed with full instructions; on the 10th he was at Brunswick, to consult about the embryo book on Prussia; and on the 11th of the same month reappeared at Berlin: to the extreme delight, doubtless, of himself and Madame de Nehra; between whom an Abelard-and-Eloisa duet, had been enacting during his absence.

It is ridiculous to say that Mirabeau's mission was made a secret, owing to his character, since its very nature would not have permitted its open acknowledgment. He entered into his work the next day, by despatching his first letter of observation to his employers. These finally reached the number of sixty-

six, and were forwarded to Talleyrand and others, who again laid them before the minister: so underhandedly did Calonne's ministry transact their business.

Directly after his return the great Frederick died. "This great man," writes Mirabeau, in his official capacity, "died August 17, at twenty minutes past two in the morning; and two-thirds of Berlin are now engaged in proving that Frederick II. was an ordinary man: nearly beneath some. Oh! could his large eyes, which expressed, at the wish of his heroic soul, seduction or terror, open but an instant, would they have the courage to die of shame, those mean-souled flatterers."*

Mirabeau had evidently been preparing for this event; for, on the very day, he despatched to the new king a long and elaborate letter of advice, together with a short note of gratulatory formulæ. The letter he afterwards published; it was called "*A Letter despatched to Frederick William II., reigning King of Prussia, on the very day of his ascension, by the Count of Mirabeau.*" (Berlin, 8vo, pp. 84.)

This, in our opinion, is by far the finest of all Mirabeau's literary efforts, and well deserves a reputation it has not succeded in acquiring. There are very few of his most splendid efforts in the National Assembly surpass this: plainer, manlier, nobler advice, no King, nor man on this earth ever can or did receive.

* Secret History of the Court of Berlin, vol. i. 217.

After a few pages of the usual introductory matter, he makes the following dignified opening:— "You come to the throne in a happy epoch: the age enlightens itself day by day; it has worked, it works for you, it amasses for you wholesome ideas; it spreads its influence over your nation, which so many circumstances have kept back; everything is now judged by a severe logic; men who only behold their fellow-man under the royal mantle, and who demand virtue thereunder, are more numerous than ever; you cannot any more pass by their suffrages; in their eyes one kind of glory remains, all others are exhausted: military successes, political talents, prodigies of art, progresses of science, all have appeared and shone unbeclouded from one extremity of Europe to the other; enlightened beneficence, which organizes and vivifies empires, has not yet mounted on the throne, pure and without admixture. It is for you to seat it there: that sublime glory is reserved for you!"*

A page or two further on, he rises from this strain of calm dignity to the moral sublime.

"The Great!—Sire, you would obtain that title; but you would obtain it from the mouth of history, and from that of future ages. You would disdain it from that of courtiers. If you do that which the son of your slave has done ten times a day better than you, *they* will tell you that you have done an extraordinary action. If you pander to your own

* Letter addressed to Frederick-William II., &c., p. 10.

passions, *they* will say you are acting well; if you are as prodigal of your subjects' blood as the water of rivers, *they* will say you are acting well; if you exclude the air and light from them, *they* will say you are acting well; if you revenge yourself, you that are so powerful, *they* will say you are acting well. So said they when Alexander, in drunkenness, tore up with poniard-stroke the bosom of his friend. So said they when Nero slew his mother."*

From this strain he proceeds to urge, with like freedom, upon the king, the habit of acquiring punctuality and strict attendance upon business; but advising him on no account to use the royal authority where it can be dispensed with: for, says he, and it is a golden saying, "*It is worthy of you not to govern too much!*"†

He then enters into detail; and as no higher argument for Mirabeau's philanthropy and genius can be brought forward than these detailed reform-proposals, we shall proceed to enumerate them.

1st. He advocates strenuously the abolition of that tyrannical law whereby every Prussian is compelled to serve in the army, if required, from eighteen to sixty. This unjust and insane law, he remarks, effectually banishes patriotism, since under it "they force men to go to the wars, as common cattle to the slaughterhouse; while nothing is easier than to render public service an object of emulation and glory to them."‡

2ndly. Following up that argument, he proposes

* P. 15. † P. 20. ‡ P. 23.

the establishment of a national guard; which, introduced under his auspices into France later on, has proved such a handmaiden to freedom: and also to revolution.

3rdly. He denounces in strong terms, and suggests the abolition of, that cruel law whereby no Prussian could leave Prussia save by express permission of the king, which was rarely granted.

4thly. He denounces a law, by which the king seizes the property of any foreigner who may chance to die in his territories.

5thly. With powerful argument and indignant eloquence he then proceeds to anathematize that edict which prohibited a burgher from purchasing a nobleman's estate; and those numerous ordinances rendering the difference of privileges between the nobles and people, equivalent well nigh to the state of master and slave.

6thly. He gives various hints, recommending the English mode of trial; and urges upon the king to open public works of various kinds as a refuge for the unemployed, and to consolidate some scheme for public instruction.

7thly. He advocates strenously the immediate liberty of the press: and surely it is a high honour to Mirabeau, and a deep disgrace to the magnates of Prussia, that only in 1848, sixty years after this advocacy of the principle, the censorship has got abolished; and only now when it grew apparent that the people were preparing to abolish it themselves.

8thly. He deprecates lotteries, and demands the abolition of all Jew-persecuting edicts, and the proclamation of perfect religious toleration. He censures severely the king fixing inn-charges, footmen's wages, and food prices; the prohibition of foreign produce; the inequality of the taxes paid by the nobles and people; the system of hoarding specie in the royal treasure house. "Increase," he writes, "the land tax, from which no land should be exempt; facilitate active commerce; abolish monopolies; free industry, arts, trades, and commerce, which can but exist beneath the shadow of liberty—commerce, which only asks kings to do it no evil." *

And thus having included in his category pretty well all that we in these times are still fighting for, he concludes this truly noble letter with a hope that his freedom would give no offence to his royal reader. During his second stay at Berlin also, he commenced his work on the Prussian monarchy, assisted by Major Mauvillion; and by working almost ceaselessly, contrived to make considerable progress.

But his questionable situation galled the pride of his all too-proud nature, and very soon after commencing his correspondence, he began to make and reiterate his demands for an avowed situation; and towards October, as no such acknowledged mission was offered him, his letters breathe innumerable expressions of his disgust, and firm determination to resign his mission entirely as speedily as possible. While

* P. 75.

meditating upon this resignation, news arrived from Paris, that the shifty money-jobbing Calonne had been driven to a corner; and that being compelled to adopt the hateful project of his predecessors, taxing the privileged orders, he had endeavoured to achieve it by a long disused means, and had for that purpose called an assembly of Notables.

This decided Mirabeau: he discontinued his correspondence, and in December bade adieu to Berlin, and set out for Paris. Among other good things his secret mission did, was the procuring for La Grange a liberal government pension, and two academical appointments; which induced that illustrious geometrician to take up his residence in France, where he died in 1813.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WORKS ON FINANCE—FLIGHT TO LIEGE—RETURN—VISIT TO PRUSSIA, AND FINAL RETURN TO FRANCE.

1787.

THE clouds were gathering together for a storm in the political heavens of France; and so long as the deficit and alarming back debt remained unsettled, there could be no guarantee for the security or stability of the nation. Ever since the death of Louis XV., the government had been literally without cash; and the efforts made by Turgot and Malesherbes to reduce the expenditure below the annual amount of taxes, by abolishing several situations alike expensive and useless, had led to their final resignation from office. Being succeeded by Necker, things had gone on much more smoothly for a season: but it could not last, owing to the intrinsic delusiveness of his system. It was like a man giving four months' bills for payment, and who may so go on most sumptuously till his bills begin to

fall due, and then is speedily wound up. Instead of raising the taxes or reducing the expenditure, whenever the deficiency occurred he borrowed money to meet it; and as that added the interest to the annual outlay, his loans of necessity had to increase each time: until, at length, having pushed his borrowing as far as he could, he was compelled to make proposals similar to his predecessors; which made his resignation necessary. To him succeeded Calonne; who, as we have seen, followed up Necker's system of loans to its fullest extent; and, having a better address and less probity than him, succeeded for near three years in keeping want at bay, and filling the pockets of the court-harpies. But *his* bills having now come due, a term was put to his delusive paradise; and, with mortification, he found himself compelled to have recourse to the very measures which had ruined so many of his forerunners in office. But he could not hope that the privileged orders would perform an act of self-denial for him, which they had refused to Necker; who was far more respected than Calonne by all parties: prudish pedant though he was. In order, therefore, to conciliate the nation by some show of granting the increasing demands for the revival of several ancient assemblies, suppressed by powerful kings, he lighted upon the scheme of convoking an assembly of Notables. The assembling of this body (which consisted merely of a deputation of the chief grades in the nation; leaving out, of course, that

chiefest grade of all—the people), was not likely to give more power, or even a chance of success to Calonne: but it was a chance of some kind, and was therefore preferable to simply submitting it to the same tribunal which had rejected the self-same proposals so frequently before. They were convoked *de par le roi*, December the 29th, 1786; and the day appointed for their meeting was the ensuing 22nd of February.

It was in the interval that thus occurred: when the bewildered minister was preparing his financial statements, and propositions for taxation and reform of imposts, that Mirabeau arrived at Paris, flashing down upon the scene of action, and prepared to take share in the battle; certain that, between whomsoever it might be waged, there would be a right side and a wrong; and determined, to the best of his ability, to support the former, and wage war against the latter.

He had, as we stated, been hurried away by the news of this convocation of notables; and had come to Paris in the hope of being chosen for their secretary: but when, on the 27th of January, he reached the metropolis, he found that they had even so early elected their secretary; having conferred that honour upon an old friend of Mirabeau's—Dupont de Nemours.

Disappointed of this situation, Mirabeau endeavoured to procure a diplomatic mission to Nimeguen; to bring about, if possible, an amicable arrangement between the Dutch factions of the Stadtholderists

and the republican party: but was unsuccessful, owing chiefly to Calonne fancying his pen would be useful to him in his coming hour of need. In this idea he was, however, much disappointed; for Mirabeau, when sounded by his go-between friends on the subject, steadfastly refused to sell his pen to any minister; and declined pledging himself as to the side he should take, until he saw the statement wherewith Calonne would furnish the notables, and which he promised to attack or defend as it deserved.

During his journey from Berlin, he had employed his leisure in ruminating upon a paper on the money-crisis, to lay before the notables, in order to induce his appointment to the secretaryship. The scheme for that having been well studied, and fresh matter springing up, he decided now upon reducing it to paper, and sending it forth upon the waves of political literature. Three weeks' hard labour succeeded in stringing together a series of declamatory paragraphs, all censuring the Necker-Calonne loan-system, and all breathing the same hope for some definite and tangible result to spring from these notables. This was called, "*A Denunciation of Stock-Jobbing to the King, and the Assembly of Notables*" (Paris, 8vo., pp. 143), and issued from the press on the 26th of February, two days subsequent to the first meeting of the notables.

It was unfortunate for his permanent remembrance in the annals of mankind, that his talents were so

little devoted to literature; and, in the cases where he did commit his thoughts to the press, that they have been, for the most part, on the topics of the day alone. The orator is by his nature of a much less enduring character than the book-writer; because his fame lives by tradition as much as by readable proof. The charm of such men as Demosthenes and Mirabeau lay as much in the delivery as the substance delivered; and the very Philippics themselves sound twaddle as read by some modern blunderer. We have *heard of* Demosthenes; we *know* Homer: that is the distinction between the orator and the literator. But in Mirabeau's case, it is the orator that keeps the literator alive at all; and had it not been for his spoken words, no man in these days would be writing of his written ones. Are they then, so very contemptible? No; but are, unfortunately, as warm, genial rain falling upon rocks. The subjects treated of consign the books to oblivion: not from any want of genius in the treatment. It is only because we have to render a complete account of all that he said, wrote, or acted, that we notice at all such books as this "Denunciation of Stock-jobbing;" concerning which it may be sufficient to say, that it is a *bonâ-fide Denunciation,* written with that earnestness and headlong argument so characteristic of its author: eloquent enough at times, but unreadable by reason of a total want of interest in the topic discussed; and, at the same time, that it is quite too declamatory and abusive. Necker (and

Calonne slightly) comes in for a lengthy and acrimonious castigation.

But however dull this composition may be now, such it was not deemed then; for, like everything a great man says, it was a word in season, and told as such words always do. The noise of it went over France directly, and drew down upon Mirabeau's shoulders the praise and blame of thousands, alike indifferent to his independent spirit. Among those who passed encomiums upon him, were the king and a great number of the sitting notables. The censurers of his labour *acted* their censure: as we shall shortly see. The success of this induced Mirabeau to follow it up with another of the same character; only not attempting to veil the object of his writing—Necker's exposure—under any other guise. On the 19th of March, appeared his "*First Letter of the Count of Mirabeau, on M. Necker's Administration, in reply to M. de Lacratelle,*" (Paris, 8vo., pp. 8.) Ten times more violent than the "Denunciation," this tract is little else than personality and scurrility; and which he excuses by this singular argument:—"Can one regenerate, can one even reform only this country, without attacking individuals as vehemently as things;" forgetting entirely, that if we attack and expose principles, we attack the upholders of those principles far more deeply, because the charge of personal animosity cannot be then preferred.

But Calonne did not admire these Denunciations, although not unfavourable to the views he was pro-

pounding to the notables; for they kept the public eye riveted upon his smallest action, when he was particularly anxious not to be so accurately marked. Accordingly, he performed one of those strange feats which shake the confidence we have in man's consistency: on the 20th of March, he banished two of the most noted of the stock-jobbers whom Mirabeau had denounced, and on the same day the denouncer himself received a hint that he was to be arrested. This was like a lazy parent, who, when two of his children run to him with a grievance, one being clearly right and another clearly wrong, whips them both by way of making sure.

One could almost love this Calonne, he was so good-humoured: no such thing as malice about him; and it is very evident that, troublesome as Mirabeau really must have been to his plans, the minister had a strong affection for him at the bottom. Therefore, when he smote, he let the rod fall gently; and although a formal order for arrest was given into the hands of the lieutenant of police, it was not attempted to be executed till Mirabeau had time to leave Paris: which he did on the 22nd of March. On the day following, he thus writes to Madame Nehra, whom he had left at Berlin:—

"You will have received, my dear Yet-lie,* by the courier who left Paris on the 23rd, many reasons for

* A rather absurd and childish term of endearment: for how a woman can be dearer to a man from calling her by a ridiculous epithet, does not appear.

Calonne slightly) comes in for a lengthy and acri-
monious castigation.

But however dull this composition may be now, such it was not deemed then; for, like everything a great man says, it was a word in season, and told as such words always do. The noise of it went over France directly, and drew down upon Mirabeau's shoulders the praise and blame of thousands, alike indifferent to his independent spirit. Among those who passed encomiums upon him, were the king and a great number of the sitting notables. The censurers of his labour *acted* their censure: as we shall shortly see. The success of this induced Mirabeau to follow it up with another of the same character; only not attempting to veil the object of his writing—Necker's exposure—under any other guise. On the 19th of March, appeared his "*First Letter of the Count of Mirabeau, on M. Necker's Administration, in reply to M. de Lacratelle,*" (Paris, 8vo., pp. 8.) Ten times more violent than the "Denunciation," this tract is little else than personality and scurrility; and which he excuses by this singular argument:—"Can one regenerate, can one even reform only this country, without attacking individuals as vehemently a[illegible] things;" forgetting entirely, that if we attack a[illegible] expose principles, we attack the upholders of th[illegible] principles far more deeply, because the charg[illegible] personal animosity cannot be then preferred.

But Calonne did not [illegible] although not unfavourable to [illegible]

alarm. It is, however, so incredible that they should have allowed me to remain unmolested for fourteen days, to strike me on the fifteenth, that you will not have expected that: but my success was too great for them to pardon me for it. On the 20th, an order of the king ordered the Abbé of Espagnac and Barroud* to leave Paris; and I received three messengers, who warned me that I should be arrested the same day. I was firmly resolved to bear up against the storm; but, when I knew that the order was not for the Bastile, but for an old fortress in a remote province, where I should have been lost to the public affairs, and forgotten in my individual ones, I abandoned myself to the solicitations of my friends—especially to the entreaty of the Abbé de Perigord,† who has returned from Versailles, and exorcised me for five hours together to force me to set out. I therefore expect, dear Yet-lie, that on receipt of this letter you will depart like lightning, and come by the road which leads direct to Aix-la-Chapelle and to Liège: I shall be at Tongres, which is a little distance therefrom. For the rest, this time of trial will not be long: if it chance to be, you will go to Paris, with your usual goodness, and arrange my affairs."‡

Travelling with his accustomed velocity, Mirabeau reached Tongres on the 24th of March, but did not remain many days in that village; for the citizens of

* The two stock-jobbers mentioned as having been banished.

† Talleyrand. ‡ Fils Adop. iv. 409.

Liège, having heard who was there, and appreciating his immense labours in the cause of world-freedom, sent a deputation to request him to honour their city by his residence: and, accordingly, he adjourned thither, where he was very liberally entertained during the whole period of his sojourn. There, early in April, his dear friend Madame de Nehra, and their adopted son, joined him; and, shortly after their arrival, he published another financial pamphlet, entitled, "*Second Letter on the Administration of M. Necker.*" (Tongres, 8vo, pp. 44.); even more abusive and intemperate than the former one, but worthy of notice as a testimony of Mirabeau's magnanimity. Necker had published a pamphlet, denying the accuracy of the financial statements Calonne had promulgated before the Assembly of Notables, impeaching the minister's veracity and wisdom; and Calonne, having unwisely answered by the bad—most bad, argument of banishment, Necker was fast rising into the little demi-god he afterwards popped up to. Calonne was also on the very verge of ruin; his dismissal, and perhaps impeachment, expected daily: and yet Mirabeau did not take advantage of these fortuitous aids, whereby he could so easily have repaid with interest the numerous slights Calonne had inflicted upon him; but this letter of his is one continued onslaught upon Necker and his pamphlet, and in very many instances exculpates Calonne. As, by such proceedings, Necker having been spoken of for the new minister, Mirabeau had everything to lose

and nothing whatsoever to gain, the praise of speaking the truth, without regard to personal aggrandisement or popular applause, cannot be denied him in this instance.

One portion, however, displays a littleness of mind of which there is no other example in the whole career of Mirabeau: and we only cite it as a warning how easily antipathy to an individual leads us on to gratify that antipathy even by stultifying ourselves. It is where he devotes several pages to the demonstration of Necker's unfitness for the ministry; and, in doing this, he omits no invective or insinuation calculated to damage his reputation. "Credulous people! hasten to admire him," he cries; "he will be cursed by your children." A little further on: "The king, keeper of the honour of his people, will not permit *a foreigner** to be called, as indispensably necessary to the public credit; as the only man capable of administering our finances. Eh! what has he done, *this foreigner*, that twenty millions of Frenchmen should prostrate themselves before his chariot"—and so on. Surely all this, and such like, is very despicable: worthy a ridiculous spirit extant in England till very latterly, and working therein even now, it is to be feared, which prompted even a great man like Johnson to declare that an Englishman was worth some twenty Frenchmen, or men of any other foreign nation. The

* Necker was a native of Geneva: so scarcely even a foreigner. Rousseau came from the same place, but the French rank him in their literary annals.

admirer of the heroic in man will learn with pleasure that such a sentiment, as this passage of the "Second Letter" embodies, was but a splenetic eruption; totally antagonistic to the spirit of his heart, and the logic of his polity.

On the 17th of May, a decree in council suppressed the "*Denunciation of Stock-jobbing;*" and another, of the 6th of June following, passed a similar eulogium on the two letters. A foolish proceeding in any case; for the empty book will ever come still-born from the press: a good book will live in spite of the world; and as for the bad book, the more you suppress *it*, just exactly in the same proportion will it be sought after and perused!

Mirabeau did not remain long in Liège; for, while his "Second Letter" was going through the press, Calonne had been chased from office, and he imagined that de Brienne, his successor, would not put the arrest into execution. Madame de Nehra's account of their return to Paris, in some memoirs of herself she left behind her in MSS. is so simply graphic, and gives so many characteristics of Mirabeau, that no life-history of his can well be complete without it. We insert it at length.

"I only read at Liège his book on Stock-jobbing: I cannot refrain from blaming several extreme tirades, and several personalties, which appeared to me dangerous. But the moment of misfortune should not be that of reproaches, and I had not the courage to make many. We concerted together the means of

removing that *lettre-de-cachet*, which was an inconvenient burden. There is no friend so sure and so active as a woman. Mirabeau was convinced of that truth: he always had recourse to me on difficult occasions. It was decided that I should go to Paris, to keep alive the zeal of his friends, and importune the ministers once again.

"I have said before he had no idea of calculation: but it is inconceivable to what an extent he was negligent of his pecuniary affairs. After speaking to him of his dangers, I wished to ask several questions on his disputes with his father; *with whom, for nothing under heaven, would he enter into a public action, but from whom he always demanded his allowance in vain.* 'Yes, àpropos,' he said to me, 'I wanted to ask you how far I've advanced in that case?' 'How,' I said, 'what do you imagine I could know at three hundred leagues from Paris? Your journey was undertaken in part to transact it: you have seen Treilhard and Gérard de Mesley,* and you ask *me?*'—'I,' he said, 'nay, in truth, I have only seen Vignon: I have been too much engaged with other things to attend to these trifles. Know you in what a crisis we are? Know you that the horrible stock-jobbing is about to fall? Know you that we are arrived at a moment when there will perhaps not be an *écu* in the public treasury?' *I smiled to see a man whose purse was so ill supplied, care so little about it, and afflict himself so much with the public misery,*

* Advocates.

without occupying himself with his private distress! He perceived me and said—'At last, my friend, you are here: arrange all that as you will; I sanction beforehand all that you may do. And now I have nothing more to do with these details.'

"When I was about to start, there was another comedy enacted. Mirabeau took it into his head to accompany me. I combated his resolution vehemently; but he had not seen me for three months, and could not bring himself to part with me. He promised me all the prudence I desired: but I well knew how impossible it was for him to keep his word. He did not enter Paris at once: he stayed at St Denis, which he had appointed as a place of rendezvous to some friends. As for me, I went to the Hotel de Genes, whence I wrote to the Baron de Breteuil, as a commencement of my solicitations. I expected to have four or five days to concert measures. But Mirabeau grew weary of St. Denis: he arrived unexpectedly at my apartments. I was nearly dying of fear: I had taken every precaution, and he had rendered them useless by his imprudence. The servants of Panchaud said, in the antichamber, to my lady's-maid, 'It's all very fine you saying that M. de Mirabeau is at Liège; we know his voice too well: listen, it is he who is speaking at this moment: no one else has that vehemence.' They told me these remarks: I was in mortal fear: I did not cease to employ all my friends. The Baron de Breteuil* had

* This Baron de Breteuil was a firm aristocrat, and personal friend

told me that the king was very irritated; and, as I knew well how many enemies Mirabeau had, my alarm was well founded. I at length decided upon confiding to the Baron de Breteuil that Mirabeau was with me, and casting myself thereby upon his generosity. I owe him the acknowledgment that he did not abuse this confidence. The *lettre-de-cachet* was not removed; but it was not put into execution. Mirabeau showed himself everywhere, and the ministry shut their eyes." *

Would that all the documents wherefrom the biographer has to trace out the history and habits of his hero, were all so plain and piquant as these memoirs of Madame de Nehra: there is a clear vision and a ladylike self-possession in this account, which sufficiently vindicates Mirabeau in his attachment to her.

With this *lettre-de-cachet* virtually, if not *de facto*, suspended, Mirabeau, therefore, found himself once again in Paris. The aspect of the heavens had grown stormier, and many things had enacted themselves during his absence. Calonne, as we mentioned, had been dismissed. After having maintained by slippery plausibility, and cunning suasiveness of manners, a kind of flirtation with difficulties for three years and six months, he had been compelled to submit to the

of the king, but a kind friend as well to Mirabeau, for the most part. It was Necker's dismissal, and the rumour that this de Breteuil and others were to take his place, that caused that world-famous *émeute* in Paris ending in the taking of the *Bastile*.

* Fils Adop. iv. 418.

notables, plans, to which his previous ministry-career had been altogether at variance: the hateful propositions of place-suppression and of taxing the privileged classes. It is remarkably doubtful whether Calonne would not have tried some other system, had he not been promised the firm support of the king in his design. But firm support of any kind to anything was not in Louis, and his royal staff broke under the unfortunate minister. No man had any confidence in his quicksilver dexterity, and so on the 9th of April, Calonne glided gently out of office, to the delight of the Prince of Condé and the aristocratic faction; and also to Necker, and his fast-increasing popular party: and his Royal Highness the Duke of Orleans, seeing a hazy something in it, galloped all over Paris telling the story of his fall.*

On the 1st of May, about the time of Mirabeau's return to Paris, the portfolio of finance, thus vacant, had been given to Etiènne Charles Lomenie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse. This man was then sixty years of age, remarkable for nothing save grasping cupidity, and an intimacy with all the philosophers of the last reign; having himself written some heterodoxical theses, which he retracted when the church opened a field for money-getting without working. He had been elected to the presidency of the council, more from the reason that he had been the leader of the opposing party in the Notables, than from any known quality he possessed for the arduous duty he

* Besenval's Memoires, iii. 211.

had undertaken: arduous at any time, but doubly so in such a crisis as was then at its height. And qualification, truly, he had none whatsoever. Absorbing and insatiate avarice, Jesuitic intrigue, gruff fierceness, and oily, woman-charming converse were his chief acquirements. Added to which, he possessed the most inordinate ideas of authority, without the decision or courage to maintain it, and carry his plans into execution. He would have trodden down the upstarting revolution by vigorous tyranny and wholesale despotism, had he dared to do so.

With such a man at the head of affairs, it was, of course, at that time, all speculation as to his probable method of procedure: one thing, however, was most certain, and that was, that something was called for to be done promptly. In such a case, despatch will cover a multitude of discrepancies. His first definite act was to dissolve the Notables, and return to the old system of submitting supplies to the Parliament of Paris.

But away from the confusion and hubbub of Parisian life at such an excited period, on the 24th of May, leaving Madame de Nehra behind, Mirabeau departed for Brunswick. This journey was performed in order to consult Major Mauvillion concerning their joint labour—the book on the Prussian monarchy; and which was likely to be Mirabeau's chief sustenance for some time to come, though not nearly finished at that time.

In the whirlpool and chaos of stock jobbing de-

nouncings, and severe controversial recriminations, there is one fragment of a note to Madame de Nehra, which is most refreshing; it runs thus:—

"In traversing those superb plains which border Strasburg, in examining from the height of Saverne the enchanting country which discloses itself from that magnificent point of view, on both sides of the Rhine, I felt that if the devil would tempt me, he would be careful not to carry me to a high mountain. Ambition left my heart, and I said, 'Ah! how peaceably, men and their affairs far parted, might one cultivate here his own garden, and only live for his friend and for his son!'"*

The broad human heart of Mirabeau felt, it would seem, that to till the kind earth, and make her fruitful; to walk on the mountain-tops, and to listen to the ripple of the brooks, and drink in the fresh healthfulness of nature's peace, was the true destination of mankind: felt that this strange struggling and battling was not what it should be; but was a stern duty, the fruit of the accumulated crimes of ages, preparing the world for that which should be. Peace to the dead! say I. There is no inch of ground we now tread that was not won for us by their labour; that is not hallowed by their blood!

His time at Brunswick was, of course, taken up almost entirely with the work about which he came: he, however, found time to keep a keen eye upon the bellicose movement of the Prussian power, and

* Fils Adop. iv. 422.

report them duly to his friend Talleyrand, by whom they were in due course handed to the ministry. The Dutch had quarrelled with their Stadtholder, and a civil war was commencing in the United Provinces; and as the cause of kings was a common one between each other in those days—which now it is not, thank Heaven! people declining bleeding for their monarch's interfering propensities—the king of Prussia showed symptoms of assisting the Stadtholder. Mirabeau's correspondence, during his residence at Brunswick, speaks of nothing but the minutest movements of the Prussians; and is, therefore, unusually tedious in these days. The Duke of Brunswick was commander-in-chief of the Prussian army, and lay encamped in Brunswick and Westphalia; and, as his marching into Holland would have been almost equivalent to a war with France, Mirabeau's situation was doubtful; and, as he expected war, he worked with redoubled energy, in order to possess himself of all the advantages his visit to Brunswick gave him for the history of Prussia, before the war broke out: if war there should be, which was not unlikely then. The whole court were very attentive and kind to him, and the king of Prussia forwarded to him an order to consult whatever documents might be useful to his history. This work he completed in the course of August, but it was not published till the year following; when we shall notice it fully.

The end of his visit having been thus accom-

plished, and the state of affairs being still warlike, Mirabeau judged it expedient to return. He went first to Berlin, whence he proceeded to Hamburgh. At that city he disposed of the copyright of his "Prussian Monarchy," for about six hundred pounds; but owing to the distance, and his inability to go there and superintend its publication, this contract never was fulfilled on either side. From Hamburgh Mirabeau took ship to Calais, and after having narrowly escaped shipwreck more than once, arrived at Paris on the 29th of September: never more to leave the boundaries of his native land.*

* To demonstrate how careful we should be in giving credence to those unfounded tales which tradition and scandal fasten upon great men, the following is inserted. Chaussard, one of his biographers, in order, we suppose, to introduce this anecdote, makes him return by land; and, in passing through Nancy to spend the night with a lady of easy virtue, who relieved him of his purse, and left him dependent on a loan from his secretary in order to reach Paris. The truth of the matter is, that to his death Mirabeau entertained a most decided aversion to professional ladies, *and never had intercourse with such;* and also, that he never came by Nancy at all, but, as we said, by sea to Calais, and thence direct to Paris.

CHAPTER VIII.

PARIS AND POLITICS.

1787.

During Mirabeau's absence in Prussia, the state-difficulties had continued unabated. De Brienne's method of proceeding had been wise in its generation; but no further. How ridiculous to submit to the parliament of Paris similar measures which, for nearly ten years, it had been constantly refusing. For this, be it remembered, was very different to the parliament at Westminster; it being nothing more nor less than a corporation: every town, of any magnitude, had similar parliaments, and yet this one of Paris taxed the nation. Nevertheless, such was the commencement of de Brienne's career. He prevailed upon the Notables to pass an insignificant tax or two previous to their dissolution; and then proceeded to begin a stringent curtailing of the expenses. This was a good movement, but not the best: it exasperated the aristocracy, whose places thereby were sacrificed, without allaying in any

degree the expectations, fast becoming demands, of the people. It, moreover, soon became apparent that the reductions he was enabled to effect, were so insignificant as to produce no clear result on the deficit. He therefore, on the 17th of July, submitted a proposal to the parliament for increasing the stamp-tax; which that body almost unanimously refused: saying, as they did so, that their power only extended to extraordinary and temporary edicts, such as loans, &c.; *but that the only power the nation possessed to pass a permanent tax was, the* STATES-GENERAL! — an assembly which had not been called together for one hundred and sixty-three years: the last meetings thereof being holden in 1614. This declaration was the exact embodiment of the wishes of Mirabeau and the whole nation; and was hailed with one outburst of popular approval. But let no man deem this Paris-parliament as impelled to this demand by anything like patriotic views, in so recommending their convocation. A more aristocratic, thoroughly-selfish, body of men never met: they were altogether devoted to personal aggrandisement: their suggestion was only the result of a spirit of factious opposition to harass and overthrow the minister, who was destroying the places they considered as their own by hereditary right. Besides, the ideas of the parliament of Paris and those of the people on the subject of the States-General were entirely at variance. The people were prepared, should they be convoked, to insist upon

two great and important changes, whereby popular representation would be to some extent realized. But the parliament anticipated their being called together exactly after the manner in which they had been convoked in 1614, when they were merely a spectacle to juggle the people with a show of representation; when in reality everything transacted had been under the complete control of the parliament. The day for such a civic-government monopoly was gone by; as it was for a monarch to enter, habited for the hunt, and with whip in hand, and stern terror-striking frown upon his brow, *command* the parliament to register his taxes.

For the present, de Brienne was determined not to call the States at all; but to compel the parliament to accede to his propositions. On the 12th of August, he submitted to them, for the third time, his proposed stamp-tax; and, together with it, a new land-tax falling equally upon all parties. This latter tax did not suit the parliament: it was abolishing the privilege of being untaxed, which had existed since the days of feudalism; and they were too intrinsically selfish to do any such thing. They declared once more their determination not to pass any such edict, and again suggested the summoning of the States-General.

In such a strait, de Brienne determined to try the strong arm, where argument and persuasion had failed. On the 14th of August, he issued *lettres-de-cachet* for the whole opposition; and on the 15th

these, and, by a royal mandate, the others, were sent to Troyes, in Champagne: there, amid the solitary dulness of rural life, to come to a clear decision as to what they meant by their late conduct; what they intended to do for the future: whether they were mean enough to sneak back, or bold and noble enough to push, self-sacrificing, forward.

It was when the parliament had been thus six weeks in exile, that, on the 29th of September, Mirabeau arrived in Paris; and immediately entered heart and soul into the consideration of the state of affairs. The Count of Vergennes, who for a considerable period had possessed the folio of foreign affairs, died in February; and, during Mirabeau's absence, M. de Montmorin, with whom he had some acquaintance, had succeeded him. With this minister Mirabeau corresponded at great length; and it is chiefly from these letters that his opinions and movements for the next few months are to be traced.

Mirabeau's opinion on this removal of the parliament to Troyes, may be gathered from his letters to Mauvillion.

"The parliament is not exiled: it is only *ordered* to render justice at Troyes. This is an absurd horror." * "I have returned weary with my voyage, and I find for comfort all the horrors of opprobrium and madness conspiring to engulph my country. It is impossible for a man who thinks and feels not to

* Lettres à Mauvillion, p. 258.

be consternated; *and it is not given unto human wisdom to divine the period when all this will end.*" *

In fact, from this period to the assembling of the States-General in 1789, Mirabeau's opinion of the ministerial proceedings is undisguised: and, as ever, is the true and only tenable opinion. He believed it to be one continued and elaborate system of insensate blundering; and every letter he writes expresses the contempt he felt for such stupid misleaders of a king and nation. Has the reader never sat with his hands clenched, moving uneasily in nervous fidgeting, watching some silly bungler misdoing what he felt he could do so easily; but in which some weighty reason compelled him not to interfere: although he would have dearly liked to hurl the bungling fellow far enough off, and, with the coolness of conscious ability, transact it himself? If so, he may form a correct notion of Mirabeau's feeling in beholding this mad, selfish de Brienne endeavouring to untie that world's-Gordian knot: it would have been such a facile task for a brave Mirabeau to have cut it with one good blow, and to have done with it for ever.

It would seem from a letter of Mirabeau's to M. de Soufflet, an intimate friend of de Brienne's, that the minister had made proposals to him, through their mutual friend; in order, let us suppose, to employ or silence his ready pen. But as this was not an open and honourably avowed employment he

* Lettres à Mauvillion, p. 272.

repulsed the advances: declaring his intention of abiding the issue of events a little while. That portion of his letter to Soufflet, wherein he expresses this determination, is conceived and executed in his finest style of epistolary eloquence.

"Assuredly," he writes, "I do not conceal from myself that I am attracted, that I am excited, by circumstances which promise a glorious day for my country. I feel that it would be too natural, and too easy, to give myself entirely to the man who would give a hope that France shall have a constitution one day, and consequently be regenerated. But far from me the thought of offering myself to one whose designs are not known to me, are not avowed to me: far from me the impudence of soliciting confidence from one who has not yet my own. I solicit nothing; I covet nothing; I envy nothing: I have desired employment for my activity; sure as I am of serving faithfully, even usefully, by the force of zeal, of application, of perseverance, and thus giving as much as I shall receive. *But I will never even make half of the advance: they would call that intrigue, or presumption, which is only love of the public weal, and patriotism as pure in its energy as disinterested in its motives.*

"Leave me, then, in my obscurity: I say in my obscurity, *because my design is to remain there invariably, until there follows, to the tumult wherein we now are, a regular order of things; and until, some great revolution—be it good, or be it evil—commands a good citizen,*

always accountable for his vote, and even for his talents, to elevate his voice. THAT REVOLUTION CANNOT TARRY!" *

This one letter refutes a whole army of calumnies about the unscrupulous, unprincipled saleability of Mirabeau. No rational being can doubt that language like that—not vaunted forth openly, but written merely to a private friend, when its writer could never have dreamed of its ever becoming public—is not the language of an unprincipled man; but the language of a bold, courageous, honest man, and none other. The latter portion of itself alone proves for him that acute vision, which, when linked with the courage to act the conviction-result of that vision, forms a Hero.

Finding that he could not conveniently go to Hamburgh, to superintend his work through the press there: or rather that the expense would devour his copyright money; he, on the 8th of October, applied to M. de Montmorin to procure his permission to publish the work in Paris: pledging his word that it contained nothing offensive to either Austria or France. This led to an interview with Montmorin; the effect of which was the establishment of a mutual friendship and respect between them: although the desired liberty was not granted.

His "Prussian Monarchy" being thus knocked on the head, for the time being, Mirabeau was reduced

* Fils Adop. iv. 451.

to a state of extreme destitution; wherein, sick at heart of all this troublous folly-fret and delirious riot, arose once more in his soul that desire to retire away from it altogether, elsewhither, which continued to float in his bosom even to his death: as it had been therein even from his earliest youth. In this spirit he addressed a long, somewhat desponding, but yet manly letter, to Montmorin, praying for some acknowledged diplomatic employment.

"Until the time," runs his letter, "when fate shall dispose of my father, my existence and my fortune can only be the work of myself, or of the Government. Panting (*avide*) to be more and more useful, and to disappoint calumniators and wicked men, by a manner of living to which they would be compelled to render justice, the active life suits me better than the speculative; and I should prefer serving government as its servant, to risking its displeasure in my vocation of instructor . . . Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Constantinople, Alexandria, all are the same to me; *provided I can only find full useful employment for my activity.* I leave the manner to your wisdom; to your equity alone the compensation. I offer myself purely and simply; and I only add, that, accustomed to the ingratitude of men, and to the injustice of their chiefs, I shall only be more sensible of benefits, more grateful to the benefactor."*

Having refused the meaner questionable employment, it was not to be expected that the higher

* Fils Adop. iv. 468.

honourable appointment would be given him: his request was refused; but his intercourse and friendship with Montmorin did not suffer thereby. During the coming eventful year, he is to be found addressing continued letters of advice to that minister.

Thwarted in his desire for departure from this convulsed France, and doubly-convulsed Paris, he determined to stand his ground manfully, and bide his time. And, thanks to de Brienne's folly and cupidity, that time was fast approaching.

Within a week after Mirabeau's return to Paris, the banished parliament came back also. They had succumbed: to a compromise, certainly; but in reality it was a decided defeat. Their principle, of non-taxation of the privileged, and resistance to the government, was sacrificed. The minister withdrew his stamp and land taxes, and substituted in their stead, a *vingtième* (five per cent. income-tax) on all grades and classes, from the king's brothers to the peasant. To this they agreed; and, on the 5th of October, entered Paris amid the plaudits of the people. Surely the very fact of these plaudits being bestowed at all, might have taught de Brienne what was brewing in the gathering storm-clouds. The parliament of Paris, from its earliest formation, had never advanced the cause of the people: on the contrary, it had ever been the ready assistant of royal tyranny and oppression; and now their persecution by de Brienne, was not on account of any efforts of theirs to give greater privileges to the people, but because they

insisted upon the ancient customs of feudality being continued, and the hard-earned money of the man-abandoned artisan being wrung from him: and this to support the wholesale extravagance of a court, the sumptuosities whereof they who shared paid nothing to. The popular applause was given now, because that parliament had opposed the court; and that fact was sufficient. When a nation has arrived at that state of rankling consciousness of injustice and misrule, that they will make common cause with any man or men, provided they but hate their governors, let the governors beware; for their days are numbered.

Trusting that the parliament would in future be more pliant, de Brienne looked around for a scheme wherewith to meet the monetary exigencies, without the necessity of convoking the much-dreaded States-General; and about the middle of November, his new scheme was made known, semi-officially, to the parliament. This was to institute a loan for five years, and so save the hazard and trouble of an annual appeal to parliament: for de Brienne judged, and perhaps rightly, that if the parliament would consent to a loan for the year, they would also to one for five. In order to soap them, as we say, into good humour, the laws relative to Protestants were greatly lightened; and at the expiration of the loan in 1792, the States-General were promised to the nation: the court hoping that, in the mean time, some influx of power might enable

them to retard the meeting of that dreaded assembly still further.

Vigilantly looking upon every occurrence, and appealed to for judgment and advice by numerous members of the parliament and other officials, it would have been singular had Mirabeau's opinion on this astonishing measure been wanting: and it is not. Among his papers was found the copy of a letter addressed to one of his many inquiring friends: it bears the date of the 18th of November, and contains, among much other matter, the following opinions:—

"I should like to see you;" he commences, "first, to see you, then; because your year, 1792, dwells in my memory. It is impossible that that date can inspire confidence to good citizens. If, by the necessity of things, 1789 is the rigorous inevitable, why not demand them for 1789, giving that reason for so doing? If, however, the government is weak on that subject, why not shield itself by using the word *forthwith?* That word is a thousand times better than a distant date; for which there is no excuse:* for assuredly the States do not require five years either to convoke, to form, or to prepare themselves. . . . . *A convocation of the States-General is so much required by necessity, so inevitable, that, with or without*

* De Brienne's excuse was, that by that time he could extricate the nation from pressing debt, and so allow the States to meet without financial difficulties to struggle with. A truly gratuitous consideration; for which no one thanked *him.*

a prime minister, under Achilles or Thersites, it assuredly must take place. . . . As a man, ask yourself of how many days we are sure, and guard yourselves even more against delays than precipitation; for all to which this latter could lead us would be a few faults, which would not embarrass us, as we should be ripe at the period of revolution; while the former might cause terrible disturbances."*

So much as regards the proposed period of convoking the States-General. On the Loan-scheme he wrote, probably to the same party, on the same day: we say to the same party, because from both we gather that the person addressed was not in an ordinary station. Of course, his opinion of that enormous loan was unfavourable.

"I have reflected much upon the state of things, and your personal position; and this is the annoying result:—

"It is impossible to support the Archbishop of Toulouse in the plan we are speaking of: to attempt it would be to dishonour ourselves.

"To register an enormous loan, for which the legal necessity cannot be shown, and which one cannot help criticizing, save by arguing as a pretext that we have not had time to examine into and judge it; to register that loan in an edict which includes the tacit registration of three other loans, and which offers the nation a useless aggravation of its debts of about five hundred millions; to register that loan

* Fils Adop. iv. 401.

with, as the only compensation, a vague promise of convoking, before five years, the States-General—that would be, in any state of the case, a thing perhaps impossible for an honest man: but it is my opinion that it is a very perilous proposition to any magistrate,* who not only cannot count upon a majority, but whom human probabilities conduce to believe that the ministry will be in the contemptible minority they deserve; whose conduct one cannot explain, save by supposing that their intention is to seize the pretext for effecting a national bankrupty, and unfurling the standard of despotism. . . . .

"Certainly war has its dangers; but they are not to be compared, above all to a public man, to the defalcation of the public revenue. What, then, will the Archbishop do? Bankruptcy? That is not any more in his power than the money itself. Proscriptions? Martyrs are, of every kind, the seed of martyrs; and the Cardinal de Richelieu might be here, but his era would not. War with the nation? That war would be soon decided. But, no: he will do none of these things. *He has proclaimed his measures: he will recoil and fall.* That fall will have private inconveniences; for he will crush a few under his ruins: but those who stand aside will risk less, most assuredly, than those who dare to attempt to stay him.

"If you speak, therefore, make the moderation of the total pass by the energy of the details. But, how-

* By *magistrate* is meant a "member of the parliament."

ever well disposed towards the Archbishop you may be, and anxious for peace, you cannot, without losing your reputation, express yourself with more indulgence towards him than in this sense: *Let us abandon to the wisdom of the king, a loan of which his parliament cannot decide upon the organization or the necessity; provided that, by the paternal and wise consent to convoking the States in* 1789, *the parliament has the assurance that a loan of one hundred and twenty millions, is, indeed, veritably provisionary, and the only one which will be demanded from it; until the time when the assembled nation shall be able to know its own wants, to decree its own duties, to exercise its rights, and to display its resources!*"*

If the party addressed followed this most practicable and spirited advice, it was just exactly the very wisest thing possible for him to do.

The day following proved the justice of Mirabeau's apprehensions; for, although the king went to the parliament in the full pomp of a royal session, and backed de Brienne's demand with the full weight of his influence, a large majority refused to register the loan: at the head of which was the Duke of Orleans himself. This foolish, debauched prince, saw in this opposition some chance of a rising for him: though to what place or situation was not definite; for, considering his capacity, he was clearly immeasurably above his station already. On the 20th, he found himself banished to his country resi-

* Fils Adop. iv. 465.

dence of Villars-Cotterets, and two of his supporters in the parliament consigned to the bastile, on the ridiculous charge of having conspired to overthrow Louis XVI. for his cousin's aggrandisement.

It was now evident that another "absurd horror" had been perpetrated; and, impressed with this idea, on the very day of these arrests, Mirabeau forwarded to M. de Montmorin a letter of advice and exhortation, couched in a strain of such rapt earnestness, that he who could doubt, even passingly, the sincere patriotism of its author, must be, indeed, a sceptic.

"The loan is rejected: it is right that it should be so! What, then, will you do? Great God! what will you do? That is what all good citizens demand with fear: and as, to every mind the least energetic, the response is not doubtful; as the suspension of payments, and shortly after the repudiation of a portion of the public debt are inevitable, according to the plan of the principal minister; as it is necessary that you, monsieur le compte—you, the one honest man of the ministry—you, whom we all believe to be a good citizen, and know to be the personal friend of the king; as it is necessary *you* should not abandon the throne, and deceive the hopes of the nation in this frightful crisis, I have considered it as due to your good reputation, to the kindnesses you have shown me, to the attachment they have awakened in me—due, in fact, to myself; that I should not remain silent amid the desolation of the

country; that I ought to address to you a few brief reflections on the horrible proposition he is about to lay before the council, in order to shield himself by complicating it therewith.

"'Suspend the payments, since they refuse us supplies; let us crop the debt, since we cannot equalize the receipt and outlay,' say the ministers. Thus, then, ought it to be dependent upon a government's decision to raise itself by famine, by wars, by earthquakes? No, that is repugnant to human nature, to the destination and the essence of society. *To allow his subjects to perish from hunger, or to force them to it, which is more atrocious still, is for a king to avow that he is not capable of governing them—is to renounce the rights he exercises over them.*

"What, then, must be done?

"Announce, in terms precise and solemn, 1789 for the States-General; with which you can no longer dispense. In vain you would delay that epoch: the weight of the debt would not be diminished by it, because the national honour would prevent most surely the States-General from adopting any diminutions which might be projected. I say *diminution*, because to project more would be to have the abominable design of provoking the most violent of all seditions. By an adjournment, that the force of things would soon cause to be retracted, independent of all clamour,—by a delay which, moreover, would leave all in stagnation and anarchy,—by a distant date, I say, you would only lose the fruit of such an

august proclamation. That will be incontestably the most beautiful year of the king's life, when he shall assemble the nation. . . . . .

"I swear, Monsieur le Compte, before my conscience and in the face of Heaven, that this is the calmest, the most moderate, the most subdued thing one can say upon the state of things to which the inconceivable ignorance of the minister has conducted us: this is the least sinister prognostication one can give the king:—dishonoured abroad, furious at home; a derision to others, a horror to ourselves; dangerous only to our rulers—such shall we become, if the king show only the intention to fail in his engagements. If this picture can allow the wrong heads who have led us to this fatal term to remain without terror, I ask if they have well calculated the convulsions of hunger—the genius of despair? I ask will they *dare* to answer for the sequel with regard to the personal security of those who surround the throne—of the king himself? . . . Ah! Monsieur le Compte, say but the word, and our intrepid Erostrati will speedily beat the earth with their pale and livid foreheads! *You know that the time is no more when the favour of a king sufficed to make the renown of a minister—his disfavour to ruin him: elsewise and more exalted now are the sources of true glory; it is the nation henceforth—it is the nation alone shall make political fortunes.* Read and re-read, I conjure you in the name of the country, these lines traced in haste; which I send you under the seal of confidence

the most secret. Take the side of your conscience, rather than your wisdom. It is one of those moments when courage is prudence, when delays are crimes, and when silence is dishonour! Speak, therefore—say all; and, if you are not comprehended, retire: that you may not survive in office the dishonour of the government, and that they may not have to reproach you with having assisted at the deliberation which decreed the shame of France."*

To this vigorous advice, testimony of ours would be gratuitous. M. de Montmorin was, like Louis himself, one of those mild, undecided men, who have a rooted horror of what is termed "extreme opinions:" as if there could be other than two opinions (and both "extremes"), viz., God's Truth and the devil's Falsehood: one of those who perform incredible negative harm by the lack of firmness to do a bold and positive good. The advice produced no tangible effect upon the minister; but, it is gratifying to learn that it did not weaken his friendship for its author: which fact, while his shuffling and timid non-adoption of the advice stamps him a weak man, proves at the least that he was amiable.

* Fils Adop. iv. 475.

CHAPTER IX.

PARIS AND LITERATURE—ADVICE TO THE DUTCH—PRUSSIAN MONARCHY—ROMILLY, AND PAMPHLET ON THE BICÊTRE.

1787—1788.

We mentioned casually, in our last chapter but one, the internal rupture in Holland, and the probability of Prussian interference. The Dutch had, as is well known, ever fluctuated between a pure republic and a semi-monarchic kingdom; as their Stadtholders governed them, or were governed, and so nullified, by them. On the death of William the Third, king of England, in 1702, they abolished the Stadtholderate; but in 1747 renewed it, making it hereditary in the Orange family. In 1767, William V. Prince of Orange and Stadtholder, then nineteen, had married the niece of Frederick the Great, and the sister of Frederick-William; and this princess, entertaining lofty views of dignity, urged on her husband to reduce Holland to a kingdom subject to his family. This exciting the Dutch, on the 2nd of August,

1786, an outbreak took place at the Hague, and the Stadtholderate was withdrawn from William V. A civil war, as a natural consequence, ensued. England maintained an armed neutrality, rather favourable than otherwise to the Stadtholder, while Prussia embraced his cause openly. The patriotic party formed a defensive alliance with France; but when, in 1787, the Prussian army appeared on the frontiers, the French nation was in small position, owing to intestine commotion and lack of funds, to assist the republicans; and they therefore found themselves constrained to suspend hostilities, and acknowledge themselves defeated for the time being. But they had no idea of remaining long in passive submission: an active association worked vigorously in behalf of the republicans; and these, being in want of some eloquent fire-words to fall on the slumbering soul of the nation and enkindle them unto flameful action, about the middle of August applied, through M. Wacker Van Son, from Brussels, to Mirabeau. His life-struggle in the cause of freedom; his eloquent work on the Scheldt Navigation, wherein he had done the Dutch good service; pointed him out as the man whose word could alone produce any great effect. On the 28th of August, Mirabeau replied to M. Van Son, encouraging him and his allies to steady perseverance; but with nothing particularly definite as to any share he himself should take in their struggle. On the 25th of October, another of the patriots, M. Van Kussel, then resident at Paris,

addressed a second application to him; begging him to produce a work on the subject, showing the foolish and perfidious conduct of the French government, and proving the advantages to be gained by France if she assisted the Dutch to throw over the Stadtholder, and so constitute a firm alliance between her and the United Provinces.

To this, on the 30th of October, he replied in a very lengthened letter, in which temperance is beautifully blended with indignant denunciation of the tyrannical conduct of the Stadtholder and his supporters. He admitted all their grievances, but urged delay, and a cautious examination into their strengths and weaknesses, before anything was attempted; and therefore declined to accede to their request.

This did not satisfy the republicans: they were determined to have a work of his, and so renewed their applications all the more eagerly; and Mirabeau, thinking, perhaps, that they deserved his compliance for their perseverance, if for nothing else, decided upon acceding to their wishes.

[1788.] On the first of April, therefore, appeared his "*Address to the Dutch on the Stadtholderate*" (8vo, pp. 147); which, however, contains but little of Mirabeau's vivacity of style, but as a clear enunciation of principles is very admirable. No passages are of sufficient merit to warrant an extract: in fact, the statistic-historic portion was the work of a young man named de Bourges, whom Mirabeau's splendid achievements at Pontarlier had led to follow him to

Aix, and who now again united himself to him. But his enumeration of the indubitable, uncontrovertible rights of man, deserves honourable place and thankful praise.

"1st. All men are by birth free and equal. 2nd. All power having emanated from the people, all magistrates, government officers, &c., are responsible to the *people*. 3rd. The people, for whose good, government is instituted, have the unalienable right of reforming, correcting, or totally changing it, when their good requires it. 4th. The people have the right to assemble themselves to consult on the common weal, and to demand redression of wrongs. 5th. No man should occupy two lucrative situations at one time. 6th. Every citizen ought to obtain justice, promptly, gratuitously, completely. 7th. No citizen ought to be exiled, or deprived of life, of liberty, or of his goods, except by an authentic trial. 8th. No class, no association of men, should have exclusive privileges, save for services rendered to the State; and, titles not being hereditary in nature, *the idea of a man being born a magistrate, legislator, or general, is absurd, and against nature.* 9th. It is necessary to admit all worships. 10th. The liberty of the press should be inviolably maintained."

Had the various European monarchs studied as they ought to have done these plain and truthful axioms, and had they put them into practice, and so been *de facto* what they theoretically are, leaders of the people, shepherds—and not misleaders, and

fleecers—we in these 1848 days should not have seen our leviathanic commercial sinews stagnation-stricken, while a down-trodden Europe does battle for its rights!*

Somewhere about the same time issued from the London press simultaneously two editions of his "Prussian Monarchy," published in quarto and octavo: it was named, "*On the Prussian Monarchy under Frederick the Great, with an Appendix containing inquiries into the actual situation of the principal countries of Germany, by the* Count of Mirabeau." (London, 4to, 4 vols.; 8vo, 8 vols.)

This work is in every respect the most important published by Mirabeau: it is important because of its length, but more so from its intrinsic merits. Although for a book the style of writing is not good: it being written in swift, flowing, go-a-head style, more like an oration than a work of some thousands of pages; yet its interesting and admirable subject-matter amply compensates for this defect; and, as the declamatory style is susceptible of the highest beauties, every here and there there appear passages of such remarkable force and grandeur, that could they be strung together into one volume in an interesting form, they would still rank high in literature. As it is, by

* This was inserted just when the news arrived of the spontaneous liberty-efforts of the various continental nations, which excited considerable sympathy from the Author hereof: since when the conduct of the French and German pseudo-reformers has been such, that profound pity, well-nigh contempt, is his only feeling.

its prolonged verbosity, by the fluent extemporaneousness of its manner, it has long since ceased to be read. Such a death, however, it did not deserve; for there exists now no book on the subject that is nearly so good. The book is divided into several heads: historic, geographic, commercial, financial, military, civil and religious, and general statistic; all which are treated in a masterly manner: but the portrait of Frederick the Great is drawn with the greatest power, and the hero, hero-drawn, looks hero-like. In this, too, we have no intemperate or immoderate abuse, no vituperations; and as no one has ever been able to say anything against it as a book, charity, by way of disseminating something prejudicial to the author, has wholesalely asserted that he was not the author at all, but merely put his name to a work written by Major Mauvillion. This assertion Mauvillion himself denies, in the preface to Mirabeau's letters to him, which he published at Hamburg in 1794; using these words:—"*Perish whoever would here reproach the Count of Mirabeau with not having composed the 'Prussian Monarchy.'*" * And surely, if the major so expresses himself, no other person has any right to assert what he cannot prove at all: has any ground for insinuating that which the reputed author decisively denies. It was dedicated in the most respectful and tender terms to his father, and produced some trifling good

* Lettres à Mauvillion (preface), p. 15.

effect upon the testy old marquis; who was growing old and infirm daily.

Immediately after this, in answer to some aspersions thrown on Frederick the Great by M. de Guibert, appeared "*A Letter of the Count of Mirabeau to the Count de * * * * * on the Eulogium of Frederick pronounced by M. de Guibert, and the 'Essay on General Tactics' of the same Author,*" (8vo, pp. 67.)

In the summer of this year Romilly visited Paris, as we learn from Dumont's Souvenirs, and found Mirabeau in such exceedingly ill savour just then, that he decided upon not renewing his acquaintance: as did also the scrupulous M. Dumont; but Mirabeau hearing of them, called in upon them in his headlong, rapid manner; fascinated their heads by his brilliance; and by his open catholicity of heart, resubdued their hearts, so little before cold and doubting, into their former warm friendship. In their company he visited every place of note near Paris; taking them into his dungeon at Vincennes, and through the prisons and various establishments, charitable, criminal, and miscellaneous. The result of this was, that on the 4th of August, he issued "*Observations of an English Traveller on the hospital called Bicêtre; followed by reflections on the severity of the punishment, and on the criminal legislation of Great Britain. Imitated from the English by the* Count of Mirabeau; *with a Letter from Benjamin Franklin.*" (Paris, 8vo. pp. 128.)

This work, as its title teaches, is merely an adaptation of a series of notes by Romilly, interspersed with many passages entirely Mirabeau's. Dumont remarks, in his usual flippant manner, and with his accustomed disregard for facts, that Mirabeau translated it in a day, from a description by Samuel Romilly;* totally forgetting that no man could possibly write the amount of substance in a day: he must have been a tremendous and hitherto unfound worker who would have done it in two.

Nearly at the like period, Mirabeau performed an act, alike foolish and insensate, by publishing his letters written from Berlin to Talleyrand and others, for the information of the minister, under the title of the "*Secret History of Berlin.*" There was no intrinsic harm in these letters, and the publication was, at worst, but ill-advised; since it gave offence to nearly all Mirabeau's friends, causing a coolness between him and Talleyrand, which the latter never allowed to relax until the very day of Mirabeau's death. But there being many free remarks in it relative to high personages in the Prussian court, and some severe animadversions on Prince Henry, uncle of Frederick-William II. and brother of Fritz himself, the parliament of Paris, by an order of the 22nd of Feb. 1789, ordered it to be "torn and burnt by the hangman."

In rendering account of these two latter works,

* Souvenirs sur Mirabeau, p. 16.

we have been led to anticipate dates somewhat; owing to a desire to give a succinct and straightforward detail of the gradual progress of events, till the States-Generals were finally announced: and the nation-steed, which had been breaking in so many years for him, was so brought before him, and stamping its feet, with fire flashing from its eyes, bade him mount and ride; since he alone was competent to do so.

CHAPTER X.

POLITICAL FERMENT—MINISTERIAL ADVANCES—THE SUN RISES OVER THE WASTE-WATERS—LAND IN THE DISTANCE!

1788.

WHILE Mirabeau, stout-hearted as ever, was thus battling with inexorable want, and endeavouring to sustain his private fortunes above ruin by his literary fecundity, de Brienne and the ministry were as busied to uphold their own tottering fabric of a government. Scenting danger and probable downfall in the successful and determined opposition of the parliament under the leadership of the Duke of Orleans, the grasping old man, instead of devoting his whole energies to do *something*—not a show of something merely—applied himself to build up his own fortunes; so that, when he fell, he might fall wealthier than he rose. Early in 1788, he exchanged his see of Toulouse for that of Sens, then vacant; thus acquiring an income of 28,000*l*. per annum. This being

accomplished, he next turned his attention to his financial difficulties; and, in conjunction with Lamoignon, keeper of the seals, framed the plan for the establishment of a Plenary Court (*Cour Plenière*), the object whereof was to supersede the parliaments entirely. Several blood-princes, noblemen, and a member of every parliament, all king-appointed and for life, constituted this court; and the parliament was also to be reduced one-half, by excluding the junior members, all of whom were opponents of the minister. Sensible that such a scheme could alone be carried by dissimulation and force, the whole project was kept strictly secret: a private press was established at Versailles, the printers not being allowed to leave the workshops; de Brienne intending, when all was prepared, to issue his edicts suddenly, and so take the parliament by an overwhelming and unexpected *coup d'état.*

Knowing, however, how important it was that the nation should side, if possible, with them; while yet the whole design was but hatching, M. de Montmorin made the most secret proposals to Mirabeau to employ his eloquent pen on behalf of the ministry, and against the parliament. The grandeur and impassioned dignity of Mirabeau's letter of advice had made Montmorin appreciate the splendid abilities of its writer. He had, however, misconceived the character of his man: to write or speak against his soul's conviction, no gold could induce Mirabeau. Never was he more in need of cash than at present;

and, added to poverty, sickness was afflicting his household; and Madame de Nehra lay struggling with a long and tedious complaint. In spite of all this, he preferred a *mens conscia recti* to a pocket *conscia nummi;* and on the 18th of April returned a reply, of which the following are the most interesting portions:—

To M. de Montmorin.

"I received with gratitude the commission you wished me to perform upon the remonstrances of the parliament, and the reply of his majesty: * it is a natural and imperious opportunity for explaining myself upon the work you have desired from me.

"And, in the first place, to show the first difficulty which presents itself, such a writing—believe me, Monsieur le Compte, I have thought upon it—such a writing should not, by its nature, be either composed or published with precipitation. The principles to consider are so delicate, one is so little prepared, and it should have only the solid basis of facts. Again, the inquiry into facts demands time; their acquirement necessitates it, and the time would not be sufficient in the term you have indicated to me. Certainly a mediocre writing, and above all a mediocre writing from me, would not serve your views; the public affairs would gain nothing, and I should lose everything.

* The parliament had remonstrated against *lettres-de-cachet,* and the king had declined accepting their remonstrance.

"In reality, calculating as nothing the personal danger I should run, in drawing upon me the implacable hatred of the bodies who are not overturned, and who will devour a great number of enemies before they are so; or, rather, and to be brief, with whom it will not for a long time yet be so, if they be attacked without our having the nation as our auxiliaries,—is this the time to denounce to France an aristocracy of magistrates, save from that place where a king has not disdained to denounce them himself? At this period, can we usefully serve government by wearing its livery? Is this the moment to do battle for authority? save from that place where one has no fear of their putting into the mouth of the king a speech with which France yet rings, and the substance of which is, in good logic, *that the sole will of the monarch makes the law.* Can we think that they who admit such principles speak in good faith, and are preparing the States-General? I have had the honour to say to you, M. le Compte, and I have repeated it to the keeper of the seals, *I will never wage war with the parliament, save in the presence of the nation.** There, and there alone, ought they, can they be reduced to their character of simple ministers of justice. But if, in the place of the rights which they have usurped from us, we do not see a constitution sanctioned by our consent being born; which, with virtuous people, would be to efface the last vestige of our

* Meaning the States-General.

dying liberties: if the will of a single man ought, henceforth, to make the law in the monarchy, what need have *we* to mingle ourselves in disputes that arise between the monarch and the mandataries of his will? What have we to lose by that war? Nay, rather, why should we not encourage the resistance of the only body which has preserved the means of coming to terms with that terrible will? . . . . .

"No, M. le Compte, the moment for making a war of the pen with the parliament is not come. They suspect so much, and with too good right, the government, that the parliament recovers the confidence of the nation. Suddenly the parliaments will be, by the force of circumstances, reduced to their veritable station; their culpable intrigues will be abortive, their rash provocations will receive their merited reward: their sole force is now in the distress of the government, and the discontent of the people.

"This, therefore, M. le Compte, is the very succinct summary of the reflections that my sincere desire of serving you has dictated; combined with the events and the respect I owe myself. Do not compromise a zealous servant, *who will count for nothing his dangers on the day when it will be necessary to devote himself to the country—but who, for the price of all the crowns, would not prostitute himself to an equivocal cause,* where the end is uncertain, the principle doubtful, and the journey bodeful and gloomy. Ah! should I not lose the little celebrity of which you would engage the influence, *if I renounced that*

inflexible independence which has alone given me success; which could alone render me useful to my country—to my king? The day when, under the inspiration of my conscience, and strong in my conviction, a pure citizen, a faithful subject, a virgin writer, I shall cast myself into the *melée,* I shall be able to say—*Listen to a man who has never varied in his principles, nor deserted the public cause!*"*

That this sensible and most moving letter should have had any effect on the ministers, beyond mortification at his rejection of their advances, was not to be expected: unheeding alike individual and national warning, the imbecile, but yet rash, de Brienne blundered steadily to his ruin. Just when the elaborate scheme of his was well-nigh hatched, D'Espréménil, the leader of the opposition in the parliament, by bribing the wife or sweetheart of one of the printers, succeeded in obtaining copies of the preparing fulminations; and on the 2nd of May, he disclosed the whole plot to the assembled parliament. Led by his enthusiasm, they swore a common oath not to become members of any other court whatsoever save the parliament, and forwarded their unanimous protest against the underhand and unprecedented behaviour of the court.

The day following a *lettre-de-cachet* was issued against D'Espréménil and another; and on their taking refuge in the parliament, Major D'Agoust, was despatched at the head of a company of the

* Fils Adop. iv. 479.

royal troops, and some of the Swiss guards, to arrest them. Not knowing them by sight, he called them by name, and was answered with the cry of "We are each D'Espréménil;" but at length the parties surrendered themselves, and were immediately borne away to two distant fortresses: D'Espréménil being lodged in the Isle of Hières, near Marseilles; where he changed from his fierce anti-courtism into as rabid a courtist, until his speeches and conduct grew so unintelligible, that the National Assembly decreed him insane. The parliament protested against the arrest; but on the 8th May were assembled at Versailles, and, a Bed of Justice being held, several edicts were passed: but against all which, so soon as the Bed of Justice was dissolved, the parliament recorded its firm protest; and reiterated its demand for the States-General. Quick as electric fluid spread the disaffection to the provincial parliaments; and all the larger towns were loud in the expression of their dissatisfaction, and the proclamation of their demands. Nay, what was worse than all, when de Brienne, nearly beside himself, and stumbling lamely along the abyss, convoked the extraordinary assembly of the clergy on the 15th of June, he was met with the same declaration; that the States-General could alone do anything authoritatively, and their instantaneous convocation was advisable, if not entirely imperative. But fiercer opposition than this—opposition by blows—burst forth spontaneously and furiously in July, when the

plenary court was endeavouring to be established. At Paris, the opposition was placid, but unanimous: the very court party did not favour it; the Duke de Broglie and others of the aristocratic faction refusing to take any share in it. In Grenoble, Bearn, Dauphiné, Rennes, and other towns, all, with more or less insurrection and bloodshed, decided upon retaining their old parliaments, and not countenancing the plenary court at all. On the 14th July, the court held its first sitting; but it was so overwhelmed with curses and ridicule, and all manner of obloquy, that a second sitting was not repeated. What could the foolish old archbishop do? Poor man! he sat looking melancholy and perplexed upon the nation, as upon a watch that had stopped—that would not go: ay, and one that no de Brienne could wind up either; the mainspring (of justice and truth) being altogether wanting.

While the ministry of France were thus floundering after such a lamentable fashion—from imbecility to inanity and complete extinction—how fared it with Mirabeau? Alas, not better than with them; but even worse. Never in his varied and ever embarrassed career, had he been so near submerged as then: never had the spiritual soul-portion of the man been so harassed by the grosser material wants of food and raiment. For to whatever crisis the Government had come, it was apparent that he had, as an individual, reached that period when there was not an *écu* in his treasury: nay, what was worse still,

that that second kind of wealth—credit—was fast failing him. Dumont states, that at this time Mirabeau's character and station were at the "very lowest ebb:" and we can believe it; knowing as we do, that in this world, when a man has no cash, subsists by unscrupulous and incessant pamphleteering, and attacks the conventionalities of life with incessant courage, and so incurs the enmity of the *pars maxima*, he will be in the lowest estimation imaginable; when in reality, he should be at the highest, seeing how manfully he is doing battle with despair and distress.

Looking with the calm eye of fact, the historian beholds Mirabeau's situation about this period and finds it most tearful: a situation calculated to drive a man to rashness or to crime. With an indomitable spirit, a daring and acknowledged genius; with a character maligned, and at best ill judged; the descendant of an illustrious race, immediate heir to an immense estate; he found himself surrounded with poverty and care. Duns and creditors closed in the rearward of his prospects; no income coming in save from his publications; with hunger and want staring in upon him; sickness confining his fair comforter to her chamber, and nothing on any hand save misery, doubt, and despondence.

To Mirabeau, in such a mournful state of destitution and care, what sounds, what news burst in upon him suddenly, like a cloud-dispersing sun? It is the tidings, by ministerial announcement, that on

the 1st May 1789, the States-General of France shall meet. On the 8th of August, de Brienne declared that; on the 16th suspended cash payments; and on the 25th he himself bowed before the rising whirlwind, and laden with ecclesiastical spoil, retired from office: hated and despised of all men. Tidings such as that, they were the things to dissipate unpleasant realities from his brain: to banish present sorrow. The States-General—the very assembly for which for twelve months I have been clamouring and demanding—is now given, and the French people shall in some degree be represented. And I: in that representation, shall I not share? Shall I not be elected, sit in that august meeting, discuss with my whole soul and undeveloped genius, world-topics; charm hearts and heads of thousands from the exalted tribune, and lead my country in the true paths of legislation and freedom? It ought to be; it must be: I see it all now! "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;" and this is mine. The course is clear as the sun-bright day: in that assembly lies my peculiar orbit, wherefrom I shall ray forth celestial fire, dazzling and perplexing men's eyes for long ages. It has been a tough battle; but the end is at hand. Farewell, ye disquieting doubts, ye strugglings with want, ye random unceasing outbursts; farewell for ever! A steady track is opening out before me. For forty years I have been fighting with dishonour and difficulties; cast in a dark room of detestable confusion have I

groped steadfastly around, and now my hand is by the very handle, can I but grasp it: for forty years in dreary night have I tossed upon the wide expanse of the foamy strife waters, and lo you! now in the grey, dim heaven how part the clouds—roll back the obscuring vapours. Courage! O thou brave, fighting Mirabeau, courage: thou shalt behold the sun anon! As it is, thy fate is almost in thine own hands. Whether thou wilt rise now unto thy predestined path of glory, or remain obscure for ever, hangs solely on thy energy, thy zeal. Up, therefore, up, and act quickly: move heaven and earth to gain thine end; use that miraculous fund of daring, that supernatural industry—that demonism of the impossible of thine. In those coming States-General thou must have place: thou must not, shalt not fail.

To the work, then! to the work!

CHAPTER XI.

STRUGGLES FOR ELECTION—TO BE, OR NOT TO BE?

1788—1789.

DURING the whole of 1788, to the announcement of the convocation of the States-General, Mirabeau had been, as our last chapter's conclusion implies, labouring under a lethargic depression of spirits; owing to the severe accumulation of adversities by which he was surrounded. Only in two instances had he emerged from this state into his usual activity. In May, he published "*A Sequel to the Denunciation of Stock-Jobbing*" (8vo., pp. 90); a work undertaken with the two-fold design of inflicting a castigation on M. de Montmorin and the ministry, for paying no attention to his spirited reply to their advances; and to defend the *Chambre d'Accumulation*, in which his friend Panchaud was interested, against the *Life Assurance Company*. It is unimportant, and in no way remarkable as a work, and beyond that is only

partially written by Mirabeau; M. de Bourges,* his friend, having taken a considerable share in its composition. It demands, and reiterates the demand frequently, a constitution for France, as the only certain manner of getting out of the crisis permanently. In July he flung off another unimportant pamphlet, anonymously, on the political topics of the day; chiefly the question of the legality of the parliament passing edicts, and a historical survey of States-General and parliaments from their commencement, ending with a cry for their convocation and for the liberty of the press, and passing an encomium on the amiable disposition and good intentions of Louis XVI. This brochure was called, "*A Response to the Alarms of Good Citizens.*" (Paris, 8vo., pp. 49.) The visit of Romilly in the summer, and his intimacy with Dumont, also produced a degree of excitement: but yet, the prevailing tone of his life was that of despondency and gloom.

But the proclamation of the States-General being assembled in 1789 banished all such like incubi

* M. de Bourges is one of the numberless instances of the fascination Mirabeau exercised over men. The same undiscoverable quality which led M. Dumont to do whatever Mirabeau desired him: although, as he states in his Souvenirs, he could not tell why he did it, save that he could not help it: this same quality constrained M. de Bourges, a man of rank and talent at Besançon, to follow Mirabeau from that place to Aix in 1782. And, meeting him again in Paris now, Mirabeau's influence again bound him; and not only did he aid Mirabeau at Paris with his talents, but also accompanied him to Provence at the period of election.

directly; and, *feeling* that his place was in that coming convocation, he set to work, with that resolute energy so peculiarly his own, to gain a place therein.

Having received several advances from parties in Alsace, his first idea was to represent that province; and with that view, on the 16th of August, he forwarded a considerable letter to M. Lerrault, a bookseller at Strasburg: with a view, we suppose, of giving publicity to his principles; which he thus propounds:—

"As regards my particular views, I will tell them you concisely. '*War with the privileged and with privileges,*' that is my motto. Privileges are useful against kings; but they are detestable against nations, and ours will never have public spirit until she is delivered of them: that is why we should remain, and why *I myself shall be personally, very monarchic.*"

Let the earnest reader note well that latter sentence; and this, which, on the 14th of November, he wrote to the Duke of Lauzun: "I shall be in the assembly *a very zealous monarchist, because I feel how much we need to slay the ministerial despotism, and relieve the royal authority.*"* On these two sentences we cannot lay too much stress: they are invaluable. They give the lie to the numerous statements, that Mirabeau deserted democracy, being hired by money; they throw altogether new light on his career in the assembly; rendering it a plain and intelligible course, with its end ever apparent, and not one

* Fils Adop. v. 188.

immense distortion: as it has hitherto been portrayed.

His views as regards Alsace, were, however, frustrated; and he, therefore, turned his efforts to his native county of Provence: determined by some way or other to represent that province in the assembly. His first step was in writing to the bailli; whose good name, and the veneration his character excited in his neighbourhood, would have extensive influence. With his good uncle, Mirabeau had had little intercourse of any kind since his residence at Aix, during the celebrated law-suit there; but their mutual attachment remained unaltered. On the 3rd of September, he despatched an elegant epistle to that worthy man. The first portions are occupied in apologizing for his not having corresponded with him for so long, and explaining the reasons of that silence. That being ended, he entèrs upon the object of his letter thus:—

"The day has arrived when *talent shall be power!* Without entering into details, which the post will not allow, I am able to tell you (not as a conjecture, but as a certainty) that the States are to be convoked, and that the first half of next year will see the National Assembly.

"The kind of courage I have had in these latter times, to steer a middle course, between the parliamentary fanaticism and the madness of the dealers in despotism: which has become the most impotent of powers, has excited many clamours, calumnious or

insensate. They have accused me of silence: as if, detained in the Bastile, I should have been more useful. But even the Government has commenced persuading itself that I could be useful in these days of fermentation, when all France are partizans, and when few heads preserve their coolness. It does not appear to fear—it appears even to desire—that I should be one of the States-General."*

He then proceeds to inform the bailli how M. de Montmorin and another minister requested him to begin his endeavours to be elected, promising him private aid—to solicit the bailli to use his influence with his relative, the Bishop of Blois, as well as to support him himself. To this he received a kind and acquiescing reply, by return of post.

The next individual to be conciliated was the tough old Friend of Man; and, therefore, on the 4th of October, a letter breathing a similar spirit was despatched to him. The manner in which he "comes round" the gnarled old man, is admirable. When the Bishop of Blois first introduced Mirabeau's desire for becoming a member of the States, the old man had grunted testily, "He only wants my place:" on this point Mirabeau thus writes:—

"Why have you said that I demanded your place? Ah! who (he could not be your son) would not glory in combating in the National Assembly under your colours? Yes, certainly, if you appeared there—that is to say, if your health permits it—you would

* Fils Adop. v. 192.

make a very great sensation; and you would become the rallying point for those good citizens *who know too well this country and this people to wish for a republican constitution.* . . . But if you will not appear in the States-General, perhaps my ambition merits some indulgence, when I dared to think that, fiefs so considerable as ours requiring to be represented, if the mode of convocation is in the least reasonable, I should be the natural representative; if I had the good fortune to inspire you with sufficient confidence as to my sentiments as a public man, to make you give me your voice."*

To this letter Mirabeau received no reply; and as Necker had returned to the ministry, Montmorin drew in his offers of support: and so Mirabeau was left entirely without aid, save in his own unfailing resources. He could not take any present measures then, owing to the uncertainty as to the precise manner wherein the States would be convoked. He, however, devoted his attention to the cause of constitutional liberty; and, in conjunction with Panchaud, Duport (a member of the parliament, and leader of the anti-ministerial party therein), and others, established an association under the name of the "Constitutional Club," early in November. They met twice or three times at Duport's residence in the street of Grand-Chantier; but, other weightier matters engrossing all their attention, the club never came to anything.

* Fils Adoptif. v. 198.

In the mean time all eyes were fixed upon Necker, regarding the when and *how* of the coming States-General. For that was not straightforward even: nay, such a delicate controversy arose out of it, that Necker, with his usual paltry timidity, left it undecided at last. In the old States-General, the third estate was exactly a nullity. The nobility and the clergy being each equal to them in numbers, and as they mostly voted in concert, the people—as was the fashion, and to some extent is yet—were cunningly juggled: had a trumpery toy-pageant given them to keep them quiet. In such a system, the third estate was just equivalent to nothing: but Sièyes, in his famous pamphlet, had just then showed clearly, that, so far from its being nothing, it should, and must be, everything. The whole nation had taken up the cry; and a demand for the third being as numerous as the other two estates together, was made by almost every man in France. But beyond this, there arose another far more important question; and that was: Were the orders to vote in their respective bodies, in separate chambers, or individually, in one common hall of assembly? If the old system of voting by the body were adopted, the doubling of the third estate was a mere farce: for suppose the estates consisted of two privileged orders, 500 each, and the other 1000; and that a question was discussed, in which the third said Aye, by a majority of 900: which was likely in most cases; that the clergy said No, the Ayes in the minority

numbering 150; that the Ayes in the nobility were 100: although individually the votes would be 1150 Aye, and 850 No, giving a majority of 300 to the Ayes, the Noes would gain the day, because the votes of the *bodies* would stand two No to one Aye. We have been thus particular, because it shows how easily a nation may be hoodwinked, by the show of a privilege in reality as good as nothing.

To decide on these weighty matters, Necker called the Notables into being again, on the 3rd of November. They were divided into six offices or chambers, who voted separately; and the result was that five of the number declared for the old system of jugglery, while only one, with Monsieur, since Louis XVIII. at its head, decided in favour of the number of the third estate being doubled. But so strong was popular feeling on this topic, that, although convoked by him, Necker did not abide by their decision; but advised Louis to adopt the decision of his brother's bureau. And accordingly, on the 27th of December, the definite and long-looked for edict appeared, convoking the States-General for May 1789; decreeing that the number of the third estate should be equal to the other twain united: but, unfortunately, never mentioning the other graver subject of voting by order, or by head at all; leaving it uncertain—to settle itself as it could.

[1789.] That the elections were to take place in March, however, was not uncertain; and Mirabeau prepared at once to take active steps for ensuring

his return. Previous to leaving Paris, however, he published, about the 7th of January, his "*Correspondence between M. C * * *,* and the Count of Mirabeau, upon the report of M. Necker and the Decree of Council of December 29th, which continues six months the legality of paper money to the paper of the Bank of Discount.*" (8vo, pp. 60.) This is one of those numerous things which the biographer of Mirabeau must regard as useless and unadvised: it is the old spleen and spite against Necker and his financial system, vented forth in tenfold wrath and fury, with vituperation and invective. Yet, while we thus speak of it, and while it detracts from his character for calm reflection and prudence, it immeasurably heightens his already tremendous reputation for proud, man-despising courage. In the whole nation, at that precise period, there was no man so popular as Necker: the knowledge that he caused the augmentation of the people's representatives, had led to the delusive opinion that he was a man of the people —a man of progression and thorough reform; and, so from Languedoc to Artois, he was the object of the nation's enthusiasm—the idol of the people. For him, therefore, just at the very moment of appealing to the suffrages of the people to place him in a position he desired beyond anything upon earth, to hurl forth a fierce anathema against their demi-god, is a trait in Mirabeau one would not willingly lose sight of.

* Cerutti: he was a native of Turin, and a man of letters.

In these letters, Cerutti appears as the steady admirer of Necker and his schemes, while Mirabeau takes up the opposite side in his hottest and most abusive manner. Cerutti was annoyed at the publication of this correspondence, although it was perfectly secret between whom it took place. He inserted a very bitter, acrimonious letter on the subject in the twenty-first number of the *Journal de Paris*, and Mirabeau prepared an overwhelming reply; which fortunately fell into the hands of some of his friends, who wisely enough suppressed it.

Leaving this ill-advised publication to find its own level, and friend Cerutti to soften down into his former friendship, which he did, Mirabeau will away to Provence to push his fortune there.

CHAPTER XII.

PROVENCE — BATTLES WITH THE NOBLESSE — SUBLIME DEFIANCE — EXPULSION — THE THIRD ESTATE—PARIS—PROVENCE—TRIUMPH.

1789.

On the 8th of January, accompanied by M. de Bourges (who once again followed his hero to the scene of action), Mirabeau departed from Paris, and on the 13th of the same month reached Aix.

Mirabeau's views were, to present himself for election, more as a form than anything else, to the nobility; but, as his principles were diametrically opposed to those of his order, and as his father's influence was not vouchsafed him, he relied solely upon the Third Estate for his actual election. Of this we have evidence, in his before-quoted letter to the bailli; wherein he expresses his indifference as to which order he represented.

But, before elections of any kind took place, the nobility had several topics whereupon to pass de-

cisions: in fact, whether any elections at all for the nobility should take place, was as yet undecided by them. In the old States-General, the nobility had not sent deputies elected from their body; but every aristocrat possessing a certain number of feudal fiefs had a seat in the States by his own right. This the new scheme was to supplant, the nobility meeting in a body and selecting certain members, without regard to fiefs and landed qualification. Whether, therefore, the nobility of Provence should succumb to the new *régime* or stand up obstinately for the old in this instance, was the first great point to be decided. Added to this, was the doubling of the Third Estate; decided by a royal edict, but factiously opposed by the very men whose principles were unbounded loyalty and obedience; and the still open question of the manner of voting. On these topics the province was perfectly rabid; when Mirabeau, with his colours flying, sailed down upon them. He describes the state of affairs to Madame du Saillant, in a letter dated January the 20th.

"I arrive amid circumstances truly difficult and perplexing. The Third Estate pursues me with marks of confidence and enthusiasm, extremely imprudent even for their own cause; for it raises the rage of the nobles to its height: they have all the convulsions of an expiring Turnus. I have never seen a body of nobility more ignorant, more avaricious, more insolent."*

* Fils Adop. v. 236.

On the 21st of January, being summoned to attend a meeting of the nobility, he presented himself before them, and spoke in opposition to a protest, prepared and submitted to them for sanction, against the edict of December the 27th. He demonstrated ably the folly of such a course; showing that the edict would never be rescinded to please them, and that, as the protest was therefore useless, it was but enkindling a useless opposition to the king: as to the voting by head, he recommended a longer consideration before any opinion was given on the subject. This advice was indignantly scorned, and the protest carried.

On the 23rd was discussed the graver subject of representation by election or by fiefs: and never did Mirabeau's powers of argument shine more clearly than in his harangue on this important subject. Throwing aside the great argument of injustice, he based his deductions upon interest; conceiving that the likeliest consideration to move his selfish audience. He declared that the fief-holders alone voting, would be virtually to disfranchise the greater portion of the nobility; because, while many commoners, and trades-people even, had purchased fiefs, comparatively few noblemen possessed them at all: or at any rate not to the requisite number. Thus the nobles not having fiefs, could not sit in the States for their own order; and with very few exceptions would they have any chance of an election by the Third Estate. Thus manifesting that to

pass any such resolution as that of fief-holders alone sitting, would be an act of manifest suicide. His speech was received with marked contempt by his fellow-nobles, and the resolution adopted.

The then sitting Assembly, wherein this was delivered, was a portion of a lesser kind of States confined to the province; and the result of whose sittings was to decide the manner of election, in such cases as it had been left undecided by the ministry. But as these sat in separate chambers, and the Assembly of the Third Estate was badly organized, this was as illegal and unfair as the States-General would have been, had the ancient system been continued. Impressed with this conviction, on the 30th of January he introduced the subject to the Assembly; demanding the convocation of the three orders of the province. This being received with the same proud disdain by the birth-inflated nobles, he devoted the same night to the writing out of his oration, from memory and his notes, and gave it to the public under the name of "*Speech on the Illegal Representation of the Provençal Nation in its own States, and upon the necessity of convoking a General Assembly of the Three Orders.*" (Aix, 8vo, pp. 35.)

This brought down upon Mirabeau the fierce rancour of the whole nobility: he was called in all quarters by the most opprobrious names; stigmatized as an "enemy of the peace," an incendiary, and a pleasing variety of those elegant epithets under which ignorance ever strives to conceal its non-

argumentativeness and the badness of its cause. The sittings of the Assembly being prorogued for a little space, Mirabeau was precluded from replying to the false and unmanly attacks in person; but he did so not the less energetically on paper: on the 5th of February appeared "*An Answer to the Protestations made in the name of the Prelates, and of the Fief-possessors of the Assembly of the States of Provence, against the Speech of the Count of Mirabeau, upon the Representation of the Provençal Nation, &c. and Counter Protestation by the* Count of Mirabeau." (Aix, 8vo, pp. 90.)

It is in this reply that we find that transcendent display of eloquent genius, which poured forth like lambent flame upon the scroll of the far To-come, and stands there written in its fiery characters for men to wonder at and admire for long ages: it is the opening of the reply, and it flows forth in grand ebullience, thus—

"What have I done that I am thus so criminal? I have desired that my order should be wise enough to grant to-day that which will infallibly be snatched from it to-morrow; I have desired that it should secure to itself the glory of causing the Assembly of the Three Orders, which all Provence demands tumultuously. That is the crime of the '*enemy of the peace*'; or, beyond that, I have dared to think that the people might be right after all. Ah! without

doubt, a patrician soiled by such a thought merits persecution! But I am even more criminal than they suppose; for I think that the people when they complain are always right: that their indefatigable patience ever waits the last excess of oppression before resolving on resistance; that they never resist sufficiently long to obtain reparation for their grievances; that they are ignorant that, to render themselves formidable to their enemies, it is sufficient to remain inactive, and that the most innocent, as the most invincible of all powers is that of refusing to act. Thus think I: punish your enemy of the peace!

"But you, ministers of a God of peace, who, instituted to bless and not to curse, have launched forth upon me an anathema, without deigning even to essay my reformation by other methods!—

"And you, friends of the peace, who denounce to the people, with the vehemence of hatred, the only defender they have found out of their own bosom!—

"Who, to cement concord, fill the capital and the province with placards calculated to excite the people of the rural districts against those of the town, if your acts did not belie your writings—

"Who, to prepare the paths of conciliation, protest against the edict providing for the convocation of the States-General, although it gives to the people a

number of deputies equal to those of the other two orders united—and against all the National Assembly may enact, if its decrees do not secure the triumph of your pretensions, the eternity of your privileges!

"Generous friends of the peace! I do here challenge your honour, and I summon you to declare what expressions in my speech are wanting in the respect due to the royal authority—or to the rights of the nation! Nobles of Provence, Europe is attentive: reflect on your reply. Priests of the living God, have a care: God is listening!

"But if you maintain silence—if you entrench yourselves behind the vague declamations you have launched against me, suffer me to add one word:—

"In all countries—in all ages, the aristocrats have implacably hunted down the friends of the people; and if, by I know not what combination of fortune, such a one uplifts himself from their own numbers, he it is whom above all they have persecuted: anxious to inspire terror by the choice of the victim. Thus perished the last of the Gracchi, by the hand of the patricians: but, smitten with a death-blow, he cast dust towards the heavens, calling the avenging gods to witness; and from that dust Marius arose—Marius, less great for having exterminated the Cimbri, as for having struck down in Rome the despotism of the nobility!

"But you, Commons, attend to one who cherishes

your plaudits in his heart, without being seduced by them. Man is only strong by union—he is only happy by peace. Be firm, but be not obstinate; courageous, but not tumultuous; free, but not undisciplined; sensitive, but not enthusiasts; only stayed by important difficulties; and be always entirely inflexible: but disdain the contentions of self-love, and never hesitate between the *me* and the country; above all, hasten as much as you can the epoch of those States-General which they accuse you of delaying, with severity in proportion to their fear of the results: of those States-General where so many pretensions will be scattered—so many rights established—so many evils repaired: of those States-General, in fine, which the monarch himself desires in order that France should regenerate herself!

"As for me, who in my public career have only feared to be wrong—me, who, begirt with an approving conscience and armed with principles, would brave the universe, if so be that my labours and my voice support you in the National Assembly—if so be that my efforts there accompany you, vain clamours, injurious protestations, ardent menaces, all the convulsions, in a word, of expiring prejudices, will not impose on me. What! should I now arrest my civic career? I who, the first of Frenchmen, have proudly proclaimed my opinions on the national affairs in a time when circumstances were less

urgent, and the task far more perilous! No; outrages will not influence my constancy. I have been, I am, I shall be to the tomb, the man of the public liberty—the man of the constitution. Woe to the privileged orders! since to be therein is to be the man of the people rather than that of the nobles: for privileges shall perish; but the people is eternal!"

Men and brethren, had we no other reason for adoring God, might we not do so, in gratitude, that once or twice in the barren centuries he sends forth a man who can outpour such words as these? Let him who, in reading that sublime effusion, can call up the paltry depreciating cry of immorality and fleshly weakness—quibbling at the thorn while the rose blooms scent-exhaling at its side; let him, I say, look well into his soul: he is a man-doubter, and may easily merge therefrom into a God-doubter, a sneering Voltairist.

On pride of birth, and dogged selfish obstinacy, human eloquence, be it never so godlike, falls like rain on rocks, producing no effect: to men allied, not to making earth a field for generous self-denying exertion, but to narrow-minded prejudices and tyrannous privileges, a small etiquette-formula is nobler than the law of the eclipses; the jingle of rent-monies sublimer poetry than a Bible prophecy! Therefore, on the 8th of February, did these insensate nobles of Provence meet together once again; and, by way of reply to his wild defiance, decreed, upon

the motion of the consul of Aix, that Mirabeau, having no fiefs of his own, but being merely invested with his father's voice, had no right of sitting among the nobles, and that henceforth he should cease to assist in their assemblies.

All hope of representing the noblesse, if such there ever were, being now ended, Mirabeau bade them a calm farewell; and at the same time appealed to the people, in another pamphlet published on the 11th February, called, "*To the Provençal Nation, by the* Count of Mirabeau." (Aix, 8vo, pp. 56.) This is little else than an account of the proceedings at the Assembly, wherein his expulsion was decreed, with free comments thereupon.

Being now a *bonâ fide* candidate for the suffrages of the Third Estate, in what manner did Mirabeau commence his canvass? *By opening a draper's shop to ingratiate himself in the people's favour*, says lying rumour: without any shadow of a foundation; as, fortunately, can be most clearly proven: though whether such a ridiculous *on dit* deserves the trouble of confutation becomes a question; nevertheless as to refute it is but to give an account of his proceedings, which is our business, it may as well be done.

That this establishing himself as a *marchand de draps* was not done previous to his expulsion from the assemblies of the nobility is self-proved, because such an act would have of itself disqualified him for taking part in their debates; that he did not do so

after, our narrative will demonstrate. On the 8th of February, he was expelled; on the 11th, he issued his appeal to the Provençal nation; and on the 15th, to counteract the great injury his injudicious publication of the "Secret History of Berlin" and "The Correspondence with Cerutti," was doing his name and prospects, he departed for Paris. It was even probable that a decree of Council might lay him by the heels, and so end his election prospects in anything but a *comme il faut* manner. Following his usual policy, therefore, he went to note the actions of the lion in his very den.

On the 21st, he arrived at Paris, and called upon his various friends there: though in a very private way; and then, not thinking the metropolis safe, he retired to the little village of Polengis, to a small country residence on the banks of the Marne. The object of his visit was to gain an interview, and effect a reconciliation, with Talleyrand; who, as was mentioned, had broken all intimacy with Mirabeau on the appearance of his "*Secret History of Berlin.*" All his efforts to see that individual were in vain; and so, after a week's residence, seeing that he was gaining nothing there, while his cause in Provence, for anything he knew, might be losing ground, he decided upon retracing his steps; and so, on the 28th of February, he set out for Provence.

There exists an account of his reception at Aix, written by an eye-witness, which scatters all drapery-shop anecdotes to the winds, by showing how need-

less such a violation of Mirabeau's habits was. See how loyal men are by nature, if you only give them *a real king*, and not a crowned inanity to be loyal to!

* "At Pont Royal, that is to say, at five posts from Aix, the postmaster had orders to send a courier to Aix to announce the arrival of the Count of Mirabeau, and to detain him by some casual accident. He had a very natural pretext for so doing. His valet-de-chambre, who had arrived before him, had died of the cholera; and this gave them all the time they required. There was only one town in his route, and that was Lambesc. A hundred paces from that town, the municipal officers waited on him to detain him, and to congratulate him in the name of the community. He entered the town; the country had assembled there. Many thousands of men and women, children, priests, soldiers, and men in costume, all crying, '*Live the Count of Mirabeau! Live the Father of the country!*' The guns fired, the bells pealed, and he, shedding tears, exclaimed, '*I see how men become slaves—tyranny is begun by gratitude.*' They wished to draw his carriage. '*My friends,*' he said to them, '*men were not made to bear a man, and you already bear too much!*'

"At Saint-Cana (a league beyond Lambesc), at the changing of his horses—and it was only a village—there was a great number, with cries of '*The king for ever! and the Count of Mirabeau!*' At two

* This account is written in rude and peculiar French, which renders it extremely difficult to be intelligibly translated.

leagues from Aix, deputies from the artisans first appeared; they carried to him crowns and flowers. On arriving at the summit of the mountain, the sea of human beings which flowed forth from the town was perceived. They stayed his carriage, with a thousand and a hundred thousand acclamations, thanks, congratulations. The town of Aix is crossed by a large and superb promenade. His domestic, at whose arrival they had made a first discharge of musketry, had told them he was going to his friend's on the promenade. It was filled with men and cannon; his horses went at full speed to avoid the followers which would have clung around him; but all the crowd followed at their quickest pace. In a moment all the cannon were carried to the *Place des Prêcheurs,* bordering the house he was to inhabit. The place is crowded with people, a hundred cannon are discharged, and he descends into the arms of the people, to whom they had to open the doors of the house. There is an harangue broken by cheers and *vivats,* crowns, cries of joy, embracings; all the intoxication of rapture and of confidence. He wished the people to disperse, that he might go to where he was to dine; but this under no consideration would they do, and he was obliged to retraverse all that mass of people. His chariot was loaded with flowers; trumpeters and tambourines preceded and followed him; all these remained under the windows of M. Joubert's* house, with whom

* His lawyer and advocate in his former trials at Aix.

he dined, and the instruments did not cease playing during dinner. In the evening, he returned home. Tambourines, trumpets, fireworks, a bonfire, awaited him. Thus closed the day. . . . Half the town was illuminated at night.

" M. de Mirabeau, *so far from being intoxicated by these homages, gave to the deputies of the Commons a philosophical reproof on the danger of these exaggerations* —and, above all, on that of gratitude, which the people never owes, because one is never out of their debt. He said to the citizens: 'Hate oppression as much as you love your friends, and you will not be oppressed!' To-day we had a singular scene. Marseilles sent deputies to him: the peasants stopped them, and conducted them to the Countess of Mirabeau, and addressed her with an harangue in the Provençal dialect, in which we find these words—" *They are a grand race—'tis a sin they should ever die out!*' " *

Were there not innumerable documents corroborating this anonymous description, we should refuse it credence; but its truth, never questioned, is incontestible. The scenes took place on the 5th to the 8th of March; and on the 18th he visited Marseilles, where he was received with even greater acclamation: with military honours, municipal addresses; the very vessels in the port ornamenting themselves with their respective standards. His

* Fils Adop. v. 274. A sin truly, O ye earnest-loving peasants! and, looking upon France, now struggling in her third revolution, one would say, that another of such like race is wanting now.

departure therefrom on the 21st, Mirabeau himself paints to M. de Caraman, commandant of the province, in a letter subsequently printed (Aix, 1789, 8vo, pp. 21). "Figure to yourself," he writes, "a hundred and twenty thousand* individuals in the streets of Marseilles; the whole of so industrious and so commercial a town losing the day's work; windows hired at one and two louis, horses at as much; the carriage of a man, who has no claim but that of being upright, covered with palms, laurels, and olives; the people bending to the very streets; women holding to him their children as an oblation; a hundred and twenty thousand voices giving acclamations, and crying, *Vive le Roi!* four or five hundred of the most distinguished young gentlemen of the town preceding him; three hundred carriages following him—figure this, and you will have an idea of my departure from Marseilles."†

His pen had not been altogether silent during these triumphs. While at Aix he published on the 13th of March, "*The Opinion of the Count of Mirabeau on the Regulations given by the King for the Execution of his Letters of Convocation to the approaching States-General, of his County of Provence*" (Aix, 8vo, pp. 35). An unimportant work now, but useful then;

* This may seem an exaggeration, but any one acquainted with French love of sight-seeing will credit it. Marseilles contained 150,000 inhabitants, and Aix and other large towns being not far distant, and many vessels in port, the number cited is extremely probable to be correct.

† Fils Adop. v. 279.

and whose best description and analysis is in its lengthy title.

He had also to act as well as write; and as his name had aroused the fiery people of Provence, so had his intellect and mob-defying courage to allay them when rioting. On the 22d, the very day after his return to Aix, he received a letter from an advocate and partizan, at Marseilles, informing him that the town was in a state of phrenetic tumult; ending with an appeal to Mirabeau to come and quiet them with his eloquence and weight of character; finishing with this sentence—"The destiny of your race is to be always useful to us!" Mirabeau immediately forwarded it to M. de Caraman, the commandant, offered his services, and having received an authoritative carte-blanche from him, he instantly departed for Marseilles. On the 24th, when he forwarded an account to Caraman, all was then quiet. He had acted as a great man ever acts, with presence of mind, and with decision. He had under his guidance organized a body of special constables, doubled the port-guard, assembled the town-council, ascertained the state, and regulated the prices, of the provisions. The town, however, continued for several days in a ferment, Mirabeau endeavouring to allay it. On the 25th, he printed and distributed an appeal to their better feelings* — "*The Advice of Mirabeau to the People of Marseilles.*" And on the same day, when a courier

* This was written from Aix; fearing another outbreak.

arrived in hot haste to summon him to allay a similar *émeute* at Aix, he had the satisfaction of leaving behind him a town, pacified and orderly. The Aix outbreak was similar to that at Marseilles, only shorter and fiercer, and the people were little to blame; the whole riot having been occasioned by the proud insolence of the consul (he who had moved Mirabeau's ejectment from the noblesse). The people having assembled in front of the Hôtel de Ville, this individual had made a speech to them calculated to rouse their utmost fury: the result was that they were aroused—that he commanded the troops to fire—that they killed two of the people, and wounded many—that the consul had to fly, leaving the pacification of the town to Mirabeau, who had just arrived. His measures were at once wise and effectual: he had all the troops sent out of the town, and a guard of burgesses established in their stead; every appearance of confidence on the part of the authorities was manifested; the granaries were opened freely: and by these judicious measures order was quietly and completely established. "But," he writes, rendering an account to a friend, "know you what then happened? Scarcely was all calm, when the noblesse, whom no one had seen for thirty-six hours, re-appeared armed, insolent, rabid, demanding the places of officers of the civic guard, and, above all, crying, '*It is M. de Mirabeau who has caused all the evil!*' Thus, while Aix and Toulon were a-blaze, Marseilles, where I was, at the will of

M. de Caraman, is calm and peaceable; and it is I who have aroused Aix and Toulon, where I was not! M. de Caraman beholds his troops beaten back, scattered; the town of Aix about to be reduced to cinders;—he calls for me—all are appeased, all returned to order—*and I have caused all the evil, and have done no good! Strange logic is that of hatred!*"*

Strange, indeed, but fortunately impotent; for scarcely had these tumults lulled themselves into quiet, when, on the 5th of April, the people of Aix announced to him that he was elected their deputy; and on the 6th a deputation from Marseilles informed him, that a similar honour had been conferred upon him by that town. On the 7th he decided, as some legal business required his presence at the town whose representation he accepted, to sit for the former; pledging himself, however, to be as alive to the veritable interests of the latter as though he were their representative. Thus, therefore, on the 9th day of April, 1789, when he had exactly lived upon this earth forty years and one month, he contrived to push his way so far as to be a member of the coming States-General of France and Deputy of Aix. An insignificant achievement in appearance, but a splendid victory in reality.

This election of Aix, municipal hubbub that it was, is it not now one of the chiefest notabilities of modern history? It was the first commencement of a grand series of world-revolutions and throne-shakings, not

* Fils Adop. v. 306.

yet ended: never to end till man's arrogance and avarice bows before man's nobility and God's evangel; till chicanery and juggling have an end. So, therefore, this particular election of Aix must remain on the world's annals, above all other elections yet transacted on this world. We will call it Mirabeau's *landing-place.* There, after long tossings on the ocean of penury and persecution, he jumped on to the green sward-bosom of his mighty mother; and, Antæus-like, felt thereby a power infused into his soul, which no smooth life of conventionalities and courtly fripperies could have bestowed. The place whereon Norman William landed in Britain is not as outwardly important as the battle-field of Hastings; but inwardly how much more so: it was there he arrived on *terra firma.* Had the great Deep swallowed him! Consider that. We are altogether too superficial in our place of worship: the battle-field of Waterloo is pilgrimaged unto by thousands yearly; the house of Bignon, wherein he was born who shook France to its centre, and so *caused* that battle, has no visitors. In the same manner, we have some hundred volumes of lives and chronicles of Napoleon, a kind of noisy roaring half-hero; and, until this unworthy tribute, not one consecrated to this greatest of all Frenchmen: who was a straightforward, acute-visioned, and as entire a hero as God ever sent upon this earth.

He has landed now, O ye men of France: landed; and like a noble Lion-heart, springing, sword in hand,

armour-clad, upon the shores of Palestine, will cut his way through shameless Templars, cunning monk-impostors, and Pagan infidels, to the city of his God! He has landed, and displaying his title-claims of transcendent ability to the kingship of France, will march forth prepared to govern, to assert his rights; and men cannot question those rights: they *must* be loyal to him; and so he will be ere long *in fact*, what for ages many have been *in word*—the King of the French!

The king! not a weak lineal descendant of a far removed noble man who *was* a king; but a very king indeed: come at the very moment when a world is going rabid for one. O, if there is a true heart in France, it will beat as he advances: if there be a true man's voice, it will cheer him as he journeys on. The king! Looking over French history, we must go back to Henri Quatre before we find any other king at all; to Charlemagne, ere we discover one so great as this.

Honour and world-thanks to those brave Provençals. They it was, who, when the wave-tossed, storm-beaten monarch leaped ashore, and spread wide his standard of human God-given genius, against human hell-given cunning, placed the crown upon his head by acclamation, and acknowledged him their king. And now, nobler far than ancient Lionheart (for he went forth with steel and arrow, and this man goes forth alone with the arms of right and reason), he will bear this standard to the very heart of the kingdom—

to the capital,—until there is no loyal knee in France that is not bent unto him; that does not own his sway.

Awaken, therefore, O ye place-holders and unworkers; for when he comes there must be no idling. Ye bescented Seigneurs, who in your Versailles luxury-house fatten in idleness upon the paltry gold ye have wrung from starving industry; and thou, O most amiable but imbecile Louis Capet: prepare ye, one and all, to know what ye are; to know the station ye really merit by your abilities or goodnesses, and to take it. It was not usurpation, exactly, to loll in those high seats, when no king was there to claim them: but he has come now, and so prepare to cede them; or much mishap may befall ye: for lo! south-eastward from Provence,— with stout lion's heart, with black lion's mane, with loud, bass stentor-voice, and huge leviathanic strides—the KING OF THE FRENCH is coming.

The *Fils Adoptif*, super-acute, divides Mirabeau's life into "three great divisions," considering him as the private man, the literary man, and the public man; as though there were three distinct men, and not one tremendous giant of a man. If his life must be divided at all (and the very number of our volumes itself suggests it) rather would we partition it into two great halves—of TRIAL and of TRIUMPH. The Trial we have seen—the Triumph we have now to come. The dilettanti reader will have long ere this turned back, and, in sugary lisps in sickly coteries, is,

even so soon, denouncing our book from the few pages he had courage to peruse;—the earnest truth-seeking reader follows us still: to him we say,

Oh, brother! we are all as poor Swiss outcasts, wandering from our own heritage and our own spirit-kindred, in a hard and dreary land: we are all brethren, though, and have one omniscient and all-loving FATHER; and the tidings of the TRIUMPH of one of our band, should it not be like a dear Ranz-des Vaches music unto us, melting us into tears of a sorrowful and a holy joy? Come, therefore, and we together will examine this TRIUMPH of our departed brother—how it sits upon him—how royally he strides it—how manfully he fights, tearing to pieces the accumulated despot-edicts of centuries, never despairing, but struggling ever daringly, until the hand of Death arrests his progress, and he is rapt away, as in a resplendent Elijah-chariot, to that mysterious and unknown Home of ours, where your human orator stands dumb-stricken—speechless as a very babe; and where all human Triumphs show like paltry tinsel before the blazing Throne of GOD!

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